

# NIEMAN REPORTS

THE NIEMAN FOUNDATION AT HARVARD UNIVERSITY

Vol. XLVII No. 2 Summer 1993

FIVE DOLLARS

## God in the Newsroom

15 Articles on Coverage of Religion



Racial Tensions in the Press

By Howard Kurtz

*“...to promote and elevate the standards of  
journalism in the United States”*

—Agnes Wahl Nieman, the benefactor of the  
Nieman Foundation.

## NIEMAN REPORTS

AT HARVARD UNIVERSITY

**Vol. XLVII, No. 2**  
**Summer 1993**

**Publisher** Bill Kovach  
**Assistant to Publisher** Lois Fiore  
**Business Manager** Carol Knell

**Editor** Robert Phelps  
**Design Editor** Deborah Smiley  
**Technology Advisor** Lewis Clapp  
**Editorial Assistants** Jason Factor

Nieman Reports (USPS #430-650) is published quarterly by the Nieman Foundation at Harvard University, One Francis Avenue, Cambridge, MA 02138. Copyright ©1993 by the President and Fellows of Harvard College.

Subscription \$20 a year, \$35 for two years; add \$10 for foreign airmail. Single copies \$5. Back copies are available from the Nieman Office.

Please address all subscription correspondence and change of address information to P.O. Box 4951, Manchester, NH 03108. ISSN Number 0028-9817

Second-class postage paid at Boston, Massachusetts, and additional entries.

**POSTMASTER:**

Send address changes to  
Nieman Reports,  
P.O. Box 4951,  
Manchester, NH 03108.

# NIEMAN REPORTS

THE NIEMAN FOUNDATION AT HARVARD UNIVERSITY

Vol. XLVII No. 2 Summer 1993

## God in the Newsroom

Constraints of the Religion Reporter .....	Peter Steinfels .....	3
We Don't Get It Right .....	William Freehoff .....	5
Why God Didn't Die .....	Harvey Cox .....	6
Challenge of Pluralism .....	Diana Eck .....	9
Debate at Waco .....	Wendell Rawls .....	12
Lecher, Witch and Weirdo .....	Nancy Bernhard .....	16
God as City Editor .....	John S. Driscoll .....	21
Catholicism .....	Russell Shaw .....	24
The Catholic Church, the Press and Me .....	James Carroll .....	27
The Southern Baptists .....	Gustav Niebuhr .....	28
Judaism .....	Jeffrey Goldberg .....	30
The President's Religion .....	Shaun Casey .....	32
Black Churches .....	Adelle Banks .....	36
Religion and Foreign Affairs .....	J. Bryan Hehir .....	39
Who Reads Religion News? .....	Stewart Hoover, Barbara Hanley and Martin Radelfinger .....	42

## Racial Tensions in the Press

Howard Kurtz

A Chapter from *Media Circus* by The Washington Post's Media Reporter ..... 56

Gresham's Second Law .....	R.W. Apple Jr. ....	66
Going Face to Face With Readers .....	Lynne Enders Glaser .....	69
Missing Second Industrial Revolution .....	Alfred Balk .....	72

## SUMMER READING

At The Hinge of History by Joseph C. Harsch .....	John Hughes .....	75
Five Myths of Television Power by Douglas Davis .....	Valerie Hyman .....	76
Read All About It by James D. Squires .....	Joe Hall .....	77
Preparing for the Twenty-First Century by Paul Kennedy ...	Christopher Lydon .....	78
American Ground Zero by Carole Gallagher .....	Michele McDonald .....	79
Thinking Out Loud by Anna Quindlen .....	Katherine Skiba .....	80
States of Mind by Jonathan Yardley .....	Katherine Harting Travers .....	81

CURATOR'S CORNER .....	2
NIEMAN NOTES .....	88

COVER PHOTO—Richard G. Wood of *The Milwaukee Journal* took the picture of the old folks praying in a Lithuanian church in Chicago a few years ago.

# The Goulash Rolling Stone

BY BILL KOVACH

Three years ago the Nieman Foundation and the Center for Foreign Journalists convened one of the first conferences of journalists from the emerging democracies in Eastern and Central Europe.

Almost everyone at that meeting in Prague was still stunned by the swift and peaceful revolution that their underground press had, in part, driven. They were then entering an uncharted world of freedom and competition in which government and press relations remained to be redefined. A visit last month to Hungary with the board of the International Media Fund, which is supporting some 200 journalism projects in the region, offered an opportunity to gauge how that world is defining itself. What is happening in Hungary is in its broad outlines, if not its specifics, representative of the experience of journalists throughout the region. And the situation in Hungary is described to visitors in the context of a popular story from the Communist era.

In the 1980's Hungarians were captivated by a movie called "The Witness." It was the story of an autocratic central state planner who determined that Hungary would become a powerful world trade center by producing oranges. Never mind that the climate was not conducive to oranges. Ignoring all advice (including that of his teenage children) he covered acres of land with greenhouses filled with small orange trees. Eventually a single bud began to swell into an orange. The autocrat called a national press conference. The night before the unveiling his children crept into the greenhouse. They stole the orange and replaced it with a lemon.

Undeterred, the state planner announced to a national television audience the next day: "It may be a small orange. It may be a little bit a yellow orange. It may even be a bitter orange. But, it is a Hungarian Orange!"

Hungary is unusual in that change there was from the top down beginning in 1956 when an opening to the West allowed what came to be called "Gulash Capitalism." So open were the Hungarian Communists that it was they who set up the free elections in 1990. The year before it was the decision of the Hungarian party to let East German refugees leave for the West that first breached the Berlin Wall.

Reformed into the Socialist party, they remain one of the three strongest parties in the country. The attitudes and behavior of the Hungarian ruling party are instructive of the nature of the struggle for a fully independent press in the region. The themes found here, with minor variations, are reflected throughout the region.

The print media in Hungary was privatized immediately, largely because there was a form of underground press already functioning. Part of that press became the voice of the new government (as was the case of the Solidarity newspaper in Warsaw or the Charter 77 publication in Prague) only to break into a factional press.

In Hungary this has meant a dozen dailies and about 300 weeklies and monthlies. But the government retains important levers of control—ownership of the banks, which provide capital, of the largest printing house, and, of the only statewide distribution system. The government also owns the only statewide news agency. Generally, information from the outside freely circulates into the country but the development of a consistent independent national internal report is stunted.

Radio and television here, as in most other former Communist states, is another matter. They remain firmly controlled by the government. Independent international observers believe they will remain that way until after elections scheduled for 1994. Because

the first freely elected post-World War II government has had to make many unpopular decisions, the commonly expressed opinion is that it will have great difficulty holding office in those elections without the advantage that control of the only truly national media gives them.

So tightly has this control been exercised that the government recently removed directors of both state radio and television and replaced them with a single director—the man who ran the old Communist system.

As the elections near, there are fears, as well, that the government will try to strengthen its support among the newspapers struggling for economic survival. National cultural foundations have been created which are authorized to disburse grants of federal money.

One foundation is to be funded by a new tax, announced by government decree, on gross revenues of all print publications. The tax will go into effect this summer and the revenues are expected to go to newspapers with favorable government coverage.

In the face of such continued reluctance by government to release its grip on channels of communications, however, the press, which is free, continues to fight for space to grow and expand.

It may be fitting irony that one of the most popular newspapers in Budapest today is a weekly known as the Magyar Naranze—"The Hungarian Orange." A sort of Goulash Rolling Stone with a much more international outlook, the paper is the voice of the Youth Party of Hungary, which some believe may help bring down the present government next year.

A truly free Hungarian press is central to the editorial vision of Magyar Naranze, according to its young editor, András Vagvolgyi. "Not a Hungarian press that is a little small or a little bit yellow—Maybe a little bitter. But a free press." ■

# Constraints of the Religion Reporter

*Leading the List Are Breadth of the Beat, Space Limitations,  
Lack of Time to Write About Faith of Ordinary People*

BY PETER STEINFELS

Imagine that a major newspaper has assigned one person to cover sports. He or she would be expected to be familiar with all the world's major sports, with all the rules, the teams, the outstanding performers, the history and lore—from baseball and boxing to yachting and stock-car racing, from cricket to ski-jumping.

He or she would be asked to report all the contests week by week, to provide extra background for the World Series, the Stanley Cup, Wimbledon and the Indianapolis 500, to describe trout fishing in America, the loneliness of the long-distance runner, the goalie's anxiety at the moment of the penalty kick.

When Mike Tyson goes to trial, the solitary sports reporter would be expected to write about that. When Monica Seles is stabbed, the reporter should provide some insights. So, too, with the big trades and the salary negotiations, the controversies about women in sports, drug violations and changes in rules.

No one reporter, nor two nor even a half dozen, could remain sane and handle such a task, nor would a major newspaper that wanted to provide decent sports coverage ever propose it.

Yet religion reporters are required to do something very similar. A single reporter is expected to know about a score of Christianity's myriad branches, about Judaism in at least three or four of its contemporary forms, about Hinduism, Islam (Sunni and Shia) and Buddhism, about Goddess-worship and Native American rites.

In a given month he or she may have to write about the Church of England's decision to ordain women, Christian Science's financial woes, an apocalyptic Texas cult spun off from Seventh-day Adventism, Roman Catholic priests and pedophilia, the rise of Hindu nationalism, Southern Baptist and Mormon attitudes toward the military's ban on homosexuals, the divisions among Muslim fundamentalists, the new catechism of the Catholic church, a First Amendment case involving animal sacrifice as practiced by the Afro-Cuban religion of Santeria, or the war in Bosnia and cooperation and conflict among Muslims, Jews and Catholic, Orthodox and Protestant Christians.

With the sudden jolt of a plane hitting an air pocket, the religion reporter drops from high theology to low church politics, or bounces back from local clergy scandals to developments on the world stage.



Is it surprising that this task is not always done well?

Five years ago I became a religion correspondent, one of two, for The New York Times. I had been writing and editing about religion and politics, about interfaith conflict and dialogue, about ethics, medicine and science, about culture and intellectual life generally for 25 years—but none of it for a daily newspaper.

As often as not, I had previously been among the reported rather than the reporting. As an editor of an independent journal of opinion that dealt regularly with religious issues, I had frequently been called by reporters for comment on religious events.

I still remember the query from a business reporter assigned by one of our leading papers to do a piece on the American Catholic bishops' pastoral letter on the U.S. economy. She quickly interrupted my attempt at a finely nuanced evaluation,

"What exactly," she asked "is a bishop?"

I also remember the inquiries from television shows seeking commentators when I worked in the field of bioethics.

*Peter Steinfels is Senior Religion Correspondent for The New York Times. Before joining The Times in 1988 he was Editor-in-Chief of Commonweal, an independent biweekly published by Roman Catholic lay people. He is the author of "The Neoconservatives: The Men Who Are Changing America's Politics." Born in Chicago in 1941, he was graduated from Loyola University in 1963 and earned a Ph.D. in European history from Columbia University.*

My colleagues or I would explain that while a few individuals held extreme, opposing positions on questions ranging from turning off respirators to genetic screening, most recognized experts represented a range of moderate positions. Inevitably we would be asked for the names of those on the extremes.

In short, I did not come to this beat starry-eyed. I retain much of that dissatisfaction today, except that now I can include myself among the offenders. But my sense of the problems in covering religion is considerably changed as well. Here are some of my impressions.

One of the strongest of those impressions is the personal diligence and knowledgeability of the several dozen religion reporters with whom I have repeatedly spent time in the press rooms at gatherings of major religious bodies. These, of course, are the reporters whose papers rate religion important enough to send them to these meetings. Only something like 50 of the country's roughly 1550 dailies have reporters covering religion full-time.

In fairness, that 50 includes many of the major outlets. Add the reach of the newsweeklies, all staffed with veteran religion reporters, and the use of wire service or syndicated stories by full-time religion reporters, and much of the reading public is served by full-time religion writers. By contrast, the situation of television news is bleak. No network has a full-time religion correspondent or anything comparable to the expertise devoted to science and health reporting, let alone weather and sports.

Contrary to a widespread notion, most of these full-time religion reporters appear to be personally religious—not a small matter in view of their extensive exposure to the less attractive aspects of religious institutions. While a few have been snapped out of the newsroom and assigned willy-nilly to religion, far more have willingly pursued their present posts and educated themselves either formally or informally. I also found them with relatively few axes to grind and very dedicated to filling in the gaps in their knowledge.

But my own work seldom frees me to survey what these conscientious reporters actually produce in papers around the country. And if there is anything that five years have taught me, it is the factors that intervene between even the most conscientious efforts and what appears in print.

Among those intervening factors, none of course looms larger in the grouching of reporters than editors. Even when reporters are not responding to the explicit demands of editors, they are responding to editors' expectations. No story will ever get the opportunity to prove itself of interest to readers if, at least in germ, it hasn't already proved itself of interest to some editor. And editors range enormously in their attitudes toward religion coverage—from the conventionally fearful of giving offense to the conventionally cynical whose main interest in religion is to expose the almost inevitable gaps between its pretensions and its practice.

At *The Times*, again contrary to assumptions in some religious circles, there is very little hostility to religion and a good deal of respect at least for the fact that Americans are overwhelmingly religious. Editors are almost without exception smart, occasionally too smart, and most are willing to listen to reason about how a story should be covered. Judging from the conversations I half overhear in press rooms many of my colleagues are not so fortunate: "But, no, I can't put in the lead that the bishops broke with the Vatican today. Yes, they did turn down a statement opposing women's ordination, but that does not necessarily mean they favor women's ordination."

But even at *The Times*, knowledge about religion is hardly what brings editors to their preeminence. Some, though deeply familiar with the faith of their upbringing, may know nothing about other religious traditions. If judgment in reading the political landscape were rated on a scale of 1 to 100, most editors would probably bunch in the 85 to 99 range, while a similar rating on matters religious would find people wildly spread out, from 5 to 90. I doubt that this unevenness is atypical.

Reporters like to recount their struggles with editors' preconceptions about what is or is not a religion story, or about how important or unimportant it is, i.e., how much of a reporter's time, travel expenses and column inches it deserves.

Preconceptions are critical. Religion coverage is no less subject than other subjects to the old law that media do not so much report new stories as find new ways to report the same old stories:

- Religious leader reveals feet of clay (or turns out to be scoundrel).
- Ancient faith struggles to adjust to modern times.
- Scholars challenge long-standing beliefs.
- Interfaith harmony overcomes inherited enmity.
- New translation of sacred scripture sounds funny.
- Devoted members of a zealous religious group turn out to be warm, ordinary folks.

Sometimes I think that computer programs could be devised, leaving all the necessary blank spaces. Reporters could simply insert the names of denominations or clergy (the United States bishops' conference, leaders of the Southern Baptist Convention, Mormon officials) and the specific issue (rejected proposals to change church teaching, joined together in denouncing discrimination). They could supply quotes from critics ("Women will make up their own minds," said a spokeswoman for Catholics for a Free Choice; "the people in the pews will make up their own minds," said a representative of the Good News Caucus). They could fill in splashes of color (Whenever the Rabbi lays aside his Hebrew texts and straps on his roller blades. Whenever Sister leaves her classroom to shoot hoops in the drug-infested playground ...).

Does a new Bible translation ever enter the world without someone comparing its wording of the psalmist's fearless walk through the darkest valley, the valley of deepest darkness or, yea, the valley of the shadow of death?

Many of these Basic Religion Stories ultimately descend from the tension between religious faith and the 18th-Century Enlightenment. Paul Moses, who for two years chronicled the spiritual lives of New Yorkers before becoming the Brooklyn editor of New York Newsday, described the pattern in less sweeping historical terms, quoting a colleague's observation that much religion coverage today focuses on the points where religion "intersects with the liberal social agenda."

"What he meant," Moses continued in the May 1 issue of *America* magazine, "was that religion coverage focuses on the continuing cultural war over such topics as homosexuality, abortion, AIDS and contraception (and dissent from church authorities on these issues)." Moses compares this focus to "covering major league baseball only when there was a dispute about allowing women to be umpires."

Yet five years in the business have taught me a greater appreciation for pre-existing plot lines—or at least a greater understanding of why we rely on them. It is very difficult to start pursuing a story at 10 a.m. and finish by 5:30 without a pretty strong notion of what the story is about. Even deciding whom to phone or see requires some preliminary mental sketch of the story.

Bigger stories, on which one spends a week or two, should properly provide the opportunity to look at things afresh and to break out of preconceived story lines. The reality is that editors and reporters seldom embark on major projects without a good idea of what they are looking for. If a hypothesis proves clearly unfounded, honest journalists reverse course. But if it turns out that pursuing a quite different angle, or framing the story in a very different fashion, is simply more pertinent, provocative or revealing than the original tack, it is very hard to set aside the time and energy already invested to follow the fresh path.

Frequently I have been well into some piece of reporting, only to conclude that the "real story" was something else. The usual, almost unavoidable response is to complete the project and enter the insight on a list of future possibilities.

Unfortunately, a chief feature of the religion beat is that seasons often pass before reporters return to the same topic. A political reporter may follow a campaign, a candidate, a legislature or even a single scandal or conflict for an extended period. Only a few religion stories come close to achieving that status—the ordination of women in numerous groups or the moral status of homosexual conduct; the conservative-fundamentalist consolidation of control in the Southern Baptist Convention (a running story at least in the South although not in New York); the effort to move a Carmelite convent from the Auschwitz concentration camp site (a long-run story in New York but not in the South).

The fact that so many religion stories are one-shot affairs magnifies the constraints of the format. That has been my

real discovery of the last five years. Length, to begin with: the 900 words that are a standard length for a significant story in *The Times* (less than a page in *The New Republic*) might be generous space for the latest development in a continuing story. It is much less so if the reader must be filled in on a year's developments, basic definitions ("Exactly what is a bishop?"—or the Methodists' Book of Discipline) or theological and historical background (quick but accurate description of the split between Eastern and Western Christianity). Many reporters must work within still tighter limits. No wonder that important aspects get slighted. If sports writers reported one basketball series or tennis tournament a year for readers whose knowledge of these games could not be assumed, how would they man-

*continued on page 55*

## We Don't Get It Right

Let's face it. The media don't handle religion well with the exception of *The New York Times* and George Cornell and perhaps a few others.

Frankly, too many reporters, commentators and anchormen just don't know much about the subject and many don't care. You don't find much piety in the newsrooms of the United States. There are exceptions, of course. George Kelly of the *Johnson City (TN) Press-Chronicle*, for one. George was a devout Christian gentleman of the press, a rare breed indeed.

Too many newspeople don't know about titles, that an Anglican bishop, for example, is not the Rev. John Doe, but the Right Rev. John Doe.

How many reporters know the difference between a minster and a minister? How many know that a cathedral need not be a large church, that a cathedral is the church where the bishop places his "cathedral" or throne. Like the flagship of the fleet. Size has nothing to do with it.

Even in wedding stories, they don't get it right. Baptist churches do not have altars!

Some other comments—we read often or hear often of the so-called "religious right." We never hear of the "religious

left" (Unitarians, United Church of Christ, Episcopalians, etc.) In writing of the Baptists' troubles, the minority are always called "moderates" and never liberals. Hell, they are liberal Baptists!

The media have made fundamentalism a dirty word, like fanatic. And icon. Were he living today, Valentino would no doubt be called a "matinee icon." An icon is not an idol. That was the whole point of the Seventh General Council of the Church. Besides, the use of icon for idol is a cliché.

Another gripe. We read of so-and-so who is "an ordained priest." Of course he is ordained. Why not a "consecrated bishop" or "an enthroned pope?"

And speaking of popes, an Associated Press staffer in Rome, of all places, once wrote that all the popes had been Italians. There were French popes, one Englishman, and, of course, one Jew! (This was before John Paul II.)

Then, there is the virtual blackout of the Orthodox. It is always Protestant, Catholic and Jews. And now there are the Muslims, not all of whom are black.

Well, that's off my chest.

*William Freeboff,*  
Nieman Fellow 1952  
Kingsport, TN

# Why God Didn't Die

*A Religious Renaissance Flourishing Around the World  
—Pentecostal Christians Leading the Way*

BY HARVEY COX

A few years back an editor from *Time* magazine called to ask if I had any comments on a story on the 25th anniversary of the famous "Is God Dead?" cover. I told him I really didn't, and I am not sure if they ever did that particular story, though they did one in April 1993 about the baby boomers going back to church. I think there is a much bigger story than that to be done, maybe lots of stories.

God it seems, did not quite die after all. The predictions said that the technological pace and urban bustle of the 20th Century would increasingly shove religion to the margin where, deprived of roots, it would shrivel. It might well survive as a valued heirloom, perhaps

in ethnic enclaves or family customs, but religion's days as a shaper of culture and history were over. Instead, something else has happened. As the 21st Century begins, a religious renaissance of sorts appears to be going on all over the globe. Ancient faith traditions that some scholars were sure had been either gutted by secularism or suffocated by repression have gained a new lease on life. Buddhism and Hinduism, Christianity and Judaism, Islam and Shinto, and many smaller sects are back in action as vigorous and controversial players on the world stage. But the current revival raises at least two inevitable questions: Why is it happening? And, is it good news or bad news?

For most people, the second question is the more urgent one. They want to know what this unanticipated rebirth of the gods means for them, personally. And their curiosity often carries apprehensive overtones, as well it might. Even the people who suspected the proclamation of the deity's demise was mistaken, and who sensed that neither atheistic communism nor secular modernity would last forever, harbor severe misgivings. One can see why. Religions often come fused with ethnic and national identities, so religious revival can also revive old grudges and smoldering vendettas. It is true that the historic spiritual traditions have given birth, in the last half century, to an impressive number of compelling moral exemplars: Mother Teresa, Martin Luther King Jr., Gandhi, and the Dalai Lama. But, at the same time, ancient enmities have also reawakened. Christians, Muslims, Hindus, Sikhs and Jews are—in various combinations and coalitions—at each other's throats again. Can a crowded planet survive a dozen simultaneous new great awakenings? Are we moving ahead toward a new age



*Harvey Cox is the Victor S. Thomas Professor of Divinity at Harvard Divinity School. His research and teaching interests are in the theological, social, and political issues of world Christianity, and the mission and ministry of the church in the global setting, especially Latin America. He is the author of many articles and books, including "The Secular City and Many Mansions' A Christian's Encounter with Other Faiths." He is currently at work on a book about Pentecostalism.*



of the Spirit or slipping backward toward another Dark Ages? There is much discussion about the need for "spiritual values," but what if pursuing such values sets one vision against another and transforms the whole world into a Bosnian nightmare of contending zealotries? Will the current rebirth of religions lead toward some peaceful parliament of faiths, such as the one envisioned by the planners of the Great Columbian Exposition in Chicago 100 years ago, or will it ignite a new outburst of jihads, crusades and inquisitions? Where is it all heading?

If the "what-does-it-mean?" question is the more urgent one, the "why-did-it-happen?" question is also impossible to ignore. Why were so many wise and well qualified people—not just popular pundits but careful scholars who should have known better—so dramatically and demonstrably wrong when they predicted the imminent decline of religion? If God really did die, as Nietzsche and the more recent radical theologians announced, then why have so many billions of people not gotten the message? Was there something fundamentally askew in the reigning philosophical analyses of Western and world culture that caused such respected thinkers to make such a bad call? Why have Yahweh, Allah, Christ, Krishna, the Buddha and a host of goddesses, demigods and lesser deities come back from their premature internment as though to mock the solemn dirges intoned at their funerals?

The questions of why did it happen and what does it mean are posed at one time or another about all the newly resurgent religious movements. But they are pressed most vigorously about two in particular: militant Islam and Pentecostal Christianity. The reason these two religions are so often singled out for discussion is easy to see. They are the two fastest growing such movements in the world, and their growth, for various reasons, often evokes in some people a feeling of genuine anxiety. But the two are very different from each other. In recent years a newly invigorated Islam, often misleadingly labeled "Muslim fundamentalism," has claimed the larger share of headlines.

The *fatwa* issued against Salman Rushdie and "The Satanic Verses," the terrorist actions of a group called the "Islamic Jihad," and other spectacular episodes have kept nascent Islam on the front page. Images of Muslim crowds shaking angry fists and burning books or effigies understandably frighten television viewers everywhere, especially if they know little about Islam or its history and variety.

With Pentecostalism, however, the situation is quite a different one. For most people, it is something they have noticed, as it were, out of the corner of the eye: a television evangelist prowling the stage, microphone in hand, tie loose and hair askew, glimpsed while a viewer is grazing the channels with a remote panel; a sudden spurt of high-voltage sermonic phrases accidentally erupting from a car radio while the driver is spinning the dial; a jumble of press reports about faith healers, religious con artists, and biblical theme parks. On the Monday after Easter this year The New York Times carried a picture of Pentecostals worshipping at the center top of the first page. But after momentary attention this enormously vital spiritual movement seems to fade from sight again until the next juicy tidbit about the bedroom peccadilloes of excitable preachers pops into the news. Besides, if the average outsider knows little about Islam he probably knows just as little about Pentecostals and probably thinks of them as just a somewhat noisier and bumptious variety of fundamentalist Christian.

There can be little doubt that the current rebirth of Islamic belief is vastly important, and it gets a huge amount of coverage. Still, though it only rarely dominates the evening news, the spread of Pentecostalism—an underreported story—may in the long run be even more significant for the world's future. Part of the reason for this may be that most journalists, whose social milieu is separated by a large chasm from that of most Pentecostals, are genuinely puzzled by how to report it. The other reason is that Pentecostalism is not a denomination, church or sect, but a movement. There are literally hundreds of churches and denominations that

share the qualities of Pentecostal worship but many do not have the word "Pentecostal" in their names. Thus the Assemblies of God and the Church of God, which are largely white and the Church of God in Christ which is predominantly black, are Pentecostal denominations. But there are thousands of independent Pentecostal congregations with either very minimal or no connection to any denominational organization. To make matters more complicated, many Baptist, Methodist and other churches now exhibit certain "Pentecostal" qualities in their worship. In these churches it is most often called "charismatic" worship. There are even thousands of charismatic Catholics.

Another fact that makes reporting on Pentecostalism difficult is that although it is a global movement, there is no hierarchy, no Vatican and no single organization that brings its members altogether. But it is estimated that there are now approximately 400 million Pentecostals in the world; the number is increasing daily. Unhampered by the need to teach Arabic to its new converts as Muslims must do (so they can read and pray the Koran), it can penetrate a kaleidoscope of various cultures and blend in with them easily. Also, as the fastest growing part of what is already the world's largest religion, Christianity, and as a faith that is expanding in precisely those areas where populations are increasing, it is more likely to yield the most useful answers to the why and what questions we have just registered.

Who are the Pentecostals? It should be made clear at the outset that Pentecostals are *not* Jehovah's Witnesses, or Seventh Day Adventists or Mormons, all Christian sects that are growing with considerable rapidity though not nearly as fast as Pentecostals are. Pentecostals also are not fundamentalists. Though the two are often confused, they are, as we shall see, not only very different, but often at odds with each other. While fundamentalists stridently insist on the verbal inerrancy of every word in the Bible, Pentecostals love the verse that says "the letter killeth but the Spirit giveth life." Pentecostals take their name from the account in the second chapter of the book of Acts in which the Holy

Spirit, in the form of tongues of flame, descends on the disciples in Jerusalem (while they were gathered for the Jewish feast of Pentecost), and enables them to understand each other even though they speak different languages. This strong Pentecostal emphasis on a direct and unmediated experience of the Divine Spirit often puts them at loggerheads with fundamentalists who insist that all spiritual experience must be channeled through the inspired Word of God in the Bible.

The impression conveyed by the radio and TV preachers—an entertaining but unrepresentative fringe—can also be quite misleading. Despite the publicity lavished on Jimmy and Tammy Faye Bakker, the welcome diversion they undoubtedly provided is in no way typical of the worldwide Pentecostal movement. Its real growth area is not in America, not on television, and not among white people. Rather it is spreading in face-to-face meetings and mainly outside North America, among the people of Asia, Latin America, Africa, and in some places in Europe. A Pentecostal congregation associated with the Church of God just opened recently in Moscow and the first service was so crowded by thousands of people that it had to be repeated later.

Like Christianity itself, which came to birth in Palestine but reached its zenith elsewhere, or Buddhism, which was born in India but became the principal faith of the rest of Asia, Pentecostalism started in America but has now probably crested in its homeland while it continues to expand and flourish in the rest of the world. (The important exception to this generalization is that in the United States it continues to burgeon among Latinos, Asian immigrants and African Americans.)

The Pentecostal credo is a very simple one. They believe that God can not only save their immortal souls but can also heal their mortal bodies. They believe the Spirit can speak not just through preachers but in the dreams, visions and incoherent praise of ordinary people. They believe that this age is a uniquely significant one and that a whole new chapter in God's way of being with the human race and the planet could

soon begin. They sing joyously, move energetically, and reach out with zeal and compassion to their friends and neighbors, especially those in need. They sometimes experience what to outsiders appear to be mystical trances and they sometimes pray in sounds that some insiders (though not all) claim to be other tongues. They are famous for their sobriety, honesty and good work habits. Most of all, they believe that the Spirit of God is real and powerful, and available here and now to anyone who sincerely opens his or her heart.

It is not a complicated faith. Still, there is much misunderstanding abroad about Pentecostalism, and its significance for our common future is rarely evaluated. But this is a mistake. A religious movement that already encompasses nearly half a billion people and is multiplying geometrically should not be dismissed so easily. Indeed, by now, even the most casual observers of the religious scene have begun to suspect something of more than passing importance is going on. This suspicion may dawn, for example, when newspapers reported that the Pope was desperately worried about the millions of Brazilians and other Latin Americans quitting the Roman Catholic Church to join some other—usually a Pentecostal—church. Or they might discover the astonishing fact that the largest single church Christian congregation in the world—it has over 800,000 members—is the Koido Full Gospel (Pentecostal) Church in Seoul, Korea. Or they might notice the sober projections by eminent sociologists that—given current growth curves—by early in the next century, Pentecostals in all their variegated manifestations will outnumber both Catholics and Protestants.

There is indeed something significant going on. Pentecostals do not issue death decrees. They are not allied to surging nationalist movements. They do not take credit for kidnapping hostages or bombing air liners. Consequently, the spectacular growth of their movement—though it could ultimately have enormous political implications—does not often heave into public view. Still, not only are they continuing to grow, I believe their growth also holds

within it a host of significant clues to the meaning of the more general global religious resurgence we are now witnessing. Paying attention to Pentecostalism will, I believe, help us more than anything else to understand why God did not die as predicted.

But it is not so easy to understand Pentecostalism. Their credo, as I have said, is a simple one. But the Pentecostal movement is complex, and one can readily understand why, again for the average bystander, the jumble of sounds, sights and numbers that I have mentioned could seem puzzling, threatening, vaguely amusing or simply irrelevant to the daily preoccupations of life. After all, one might reason, there have always been people who took their religion a little more seriously than others, and as long as they stayed out of the way of the rest of us, they could be safely ignored. That might be the case here as well. Still, I doubt it, and even the most detached and secular observers have begun to wonder whether something more important may be afoot. Some detect in our current cultural atmosphere more than a mere whiff of that potent admixture of moral decadence and religious effervescence that suffused the later years of the Roman empire. Is this then a changing of the gods some future Gibbon might eventually trace? After all, Pentecostals, though they began invoking "end of history" rhetoric a century ago, are no longer the only ones talking about a new era coming in as an old one goes out. Are they onto something?

Only a few years back *The Bulletin of Atomic Scientists* set the hands of its doomsday clock at three minutes to midnight. Now deep ecologists, panicky demographers and respectable scholars like Francis Fukuyama speak in various accents about some approaching end. Obviously the scenarios of these various secular millennarians differ widely from each other, but with perfectly sober observers announcing either the "end of history" as Fukuyama does (good news, presumably for entrepreneurs and democrats), or an ecological catastrophe (bad news for everyone), the question naturally suggests

*continued on page 47*

# Challenge to Pluralism

*Rapid Growth Of Muslim, Hindu, Jain, Buddhist and Other Faiths Can Have Wide Impact on American Life*

BY DIANA L. ECK

In May of 1990 in a suburb of Boston not far from the starting point of the Boston marathon, the Hindu community of New England dedicated a temple to the goddess Lakshmi, pouring the consecrated waters of the Ganges over the temple towers, along with the waters of the Colorado, the Mississippi and the Ohio Rivers. In April of 1993 in Sharon, the Islamic community of New England broke ground for a major new Islamic center to provide an anchor for the nearly 20 mosques in the Islamic Council of New England.

These events are increasingly typical of the religious life of New England. Indeed, the religious landscape of much of America is changing—slowly, but in dramatic ways that test the pluralist foundations of American public life.

The Jain community celebrates the end of its season of fasting with a great feast held under a bright yellow and white striped tent in the back yard of its temple in Norwood, formerly a Swedish Lutheran Church. A young man being ordained as a monk kneels shaven-headed amidst the Cambodian Buddhist community in its temple in Lynn—one of three Cambodian Buddhist temples in the northern suburbs of Boston. Sikhs come to their gurudwara in Milford for the celebration of Vaishaki. African American Muslims gather in Malcolm X. Park in Dorchester to celebrate Id Al Adha during the month of the pilgrimage to Mecca. Buddhist dignitaries from a dozen monastic lineages assemble in Cumberland, Rhode Island, where a Korean Zen Master for the first time in history formally transmits his lineage of

teaching to three American teachers, one of them a woman. This is New England in the 1990's. The whole world of religious diversity is here.

This new reality is not a New York-California phenomenon of the cosmopolitan coasts of America. This is a Main Street phenomenon. There are Muslims, Hindus, and Buddhists in Salt Lake City, in Toledo and in Jackson, Mississippi.

The questions raised for America are far-reaching and will be important questions for journalists to follow—not only those who write explicitly on religion, but those who write about education and the controversies of school boards, about politics and the influence of religiously based political action committees, about the courts and the continuing reinterpretation of the foundations of religious freedom by the Supreme Court, about hospitals, health care and medical ethics in a multireligious environment. Over the next decade, this new multireligious reality will have an impact on virtually every aspect of American public life.

One hundred years ago this summer the World's Parliament of Religions was held in Chicago as part of the Chicago World's Fair. Hindus, Jains, Buddhists, and Zoroastrians came from around the world to join with the Protestants, Catholics, Jews and Unitarians who organized the 17-day event. In 1893, India's Swami Vivekananda dazzled audiences with his eloquent statement of Vedanta philosophy and Dharmapala, the energetic Buddhist reformer from Sri Lanka, berated his listeners on their relative ignorance of Buddhism. They were new and exotic figures for most of



*Diana L. Eck is Professor of Comparative Religion and Indian Studies in the Department of Sanskrit and Indian Studies and a member of the Faculty of Divinity at Harvard. She is the author of "Encountering God and Banaras: City of Light." She also directs The Pluralism Project, a three-year research project engaging students in studying the new religious diversity of the United States, funded by The Lilly Endowment.*

the Americans at the Parliament who had never before heard a Hindu or a Buddhist speak. What is most striking in 1993 as Chicago prepares for a gala centennial of the Parliament of Religions late this summer is the fact that today the diversity of the 1893 Parliament is the reality of the neighborhoods of Chicago.

The Chicago metropolitan Yellow Pages list dozens of entries under the unusual headings "Churches: Buddhist" or "Churches: Islamic." There are nearly 70 mosques and Islamic centers in the Chicago metropolitan area. According to the Chicago-based Islamic Information Service there are half a million Muslims. The suburbs of the city boast two sizable and elaborate Hindu temples in Lemont and Aurora, to say nothing of the 18 smaller places of Hindu worship. There are at least 25 Buddhist temples in the Buddhist Council of the Midwest—Japanese Jodo Shinshu, the Thai Wat Dhammaram, the Cambodian, Vietnamese and Laotian Buddhist refugee communities and homegrown American Zen communities. There are Bahais, Zoroastrians, Jains, Sikhs and Afro-Caribbean Santeria practitioners. The local planning committee convened to plan the centennial of the Parliament is far more diverse than the Parliament had been.

One need not go back 100 years to document the dramatic rise in America's Asian population. Most of it has taken place in the last 25 years. It is important to remember, however, that 100 years ago at the time of the Parliament, U.S. immigration policy toward Asia was a policy of exclusion. The Statue of Liberty stood in New York harbor facing the Atlantic and not in San Francisco facing the Pacific. Chinese workers had built the railways of the West, were industrious miners, and had built Buddhist temples and celebrated Chinese festivals in seemingly unlikely places like Helena and Butte, Montana. In 1882, however, the first Exclusion Act was passed, aimed specifically at the Chinese. In the decades that followed, the exclusion policy was reaffirmed and gradually extended to other "Asiatics." In the 1923 Supreme Court case "Hindus," which in this case meant a Sikh named Mr. Thind, were excluded from U.S. citizenship. Through the first half of the 20th Century Asian immigration was tightly constricted.

The 1965 immigration act proposed by John F. Kennedy and signed into law by Lyndon Johnson set immigration on a new footing, eliminating the national origins quotas that had linked immigra-

tion to the national origins of groups already established in the U.S. It is to this legislation that one can attribute the modern burst of Asian immigration—from about 1 million Asian Americans in 1965 to 7.3 million in 1990. The 1990 census shows how rapidly the "Asian and Pacific Islander" population is growing. In one state after another the percentage of Asian American population growth from 1980 to 1990 is by far the highest of any ethnic group—in Minnesota up 194 percent from 1980, in Georgia up 208 percent, in Rhode Island up 245 percent. Nationwide, the Asian population rose 79.5 percent in the same decade. New immigration, not only from Asia, but also from the Middle East, Latin America, the Caribbean and Eastern Europe, has begun to change the cultural landscape of many parts of the U.S. in ways that are dramatic and yet so subtle we have scarcely begun to see them.

What does this mean in terms of religion? One can make an educated guess from statistics on ethnic composition, but the truth is we do not know. The one recent statistical study done by the City University of New York as an ancillary project of the National Jewish Population Survey has been widely disputed, especially in its projection of the numbers of Muslims in the U.S. as 1.4 million. This contrasts with a minimum of 8 million estimated by the Islamic Society of North America and a figure of at least 5 million estimated by responsible scholars. Even a conservative estimate would mean there are more Muslims than Episcopalians, more Muslims than members of the United Church of Christ. The more highly charged question is whether there are more Muslims than Jews. However uncertain the response to that question may now be, it is clear that within a few years Islam will have become the second largest religious community in the U.S. Muslim, Buddhist, Hindu or Sikh communities may be small statistically, but the news of the 1990's is that they are very much present and their presence is not that of the passing gurus of the Seventies, but that of new American immigrants who have brought their faith with them to

this country and are about the business of building the institutions to perpetuate it.

The Pluralism Project is a three year study project which has engaged Harvard students at all levels—undergraduates, masters students and doctoral students—in what is basically "hometown" research on this changing religious landscape of America. Our research is guided by three questions. The first is a more focused version of the demographic question: What do specific American cities now look like, religiously? How many mosques, temples and gurdwaras are there in Denver, in Houston, in Oklahoma City, in Minneapolis? Our second question is how are these traditions changing as they take root in the American context? Are there emerging some distinctively American adaptations of Buddhism or Islam? Finally, how is the United States changing as this new multireligious reality begins to be visibly present in our public life? How are schools, hospitals, and councils of churches engaging with this new multi-sided religious life?

One of the cities we have studied is Houston. The remarkable fact about Houston is not its Texas glitter, its NASA space-age image, or its huge Southern Baptist churches, but its substantial Muslim, Buddhist and Hindu populations. Houston is the only city in the country with a comprehensive Islamic plan for the zones and neighborhoods of the city. The Islamic Society of Greater Houston has divided the city into eight zones, with a main mosque and satellite mosques in the various regions of this sprawling city. The southwest zone has dedicated a new mosque, which is the showpiece of Islamic Houston, accommodating 900 for Friday prayers. Not all the mosques in Houston are part of the I.S.G.H. regional plan, for there are about two dozen mosques in all—Sunni, Shi'a, Ismaili, African-American. Over 10,000 Muslims crowd into the George Brown Convention center for prayers on the Id festival days. In 1970 there were fewer than 1000 Muslims in Houston; today there are estimated to be 60,000.

The Buddhist population of Houston is almost as large, with an estimated 50,000 Buddhists and 19 Buddhist temples at last count, nine of them Vietnamese. There are 14 Hindu temples and organizations including the spectacular Meenakshi Temple in the southern suburb of Pearland. The Hindu population of Houston is estimated to be 40,000, with an annual summer camp sponsored by the Vishva Hindu Parishad and a city-wide celebration of the birthday of Krishna in the George Brown Convention Center attracting 6,000 to 10,000 people.

Houston, like Los Angeles, New York and Chicago, may be unusual, but smaller cities have a share in this diversity as well. In Oklahoma City there are five mosques, none with an exterior sign indicating the presence of an Islamic community. There are four Hindu temples, one Sikh gurudwara, two Vietnamese Buddhist temples, a Thai Buddhist temple, and a Japanese Buddhist Sokka Gakai International group. In Denver there are 11 Buddhist temples serving an immigrant Asian population that includes fourth- and fifth-generation Japanese Americans along with newer Thai, Cambodian, Korean, Laotian and Vietnamese immigrants. Indeed there are six Vietnamese temples in Denver. In addition there are three mosques, two Sikh gurudwaras, two Hindu temples and a Taoist temple. In Portland, Oregon there are four mosques and 18 Buddhist centers. Buddhism is said to be the city's fastest growing religion, with both recent immigrants and home-grown Euro-American Buddhists.

If one were to visit American cities and towns, as my student researchers have in the last two years, much of this changing landscape would still be invisible, which is one reason most of this comes as a surprise to many Americans. The prayer room of a newly forming Muslim community is in the garage of a home purchased by the community, in a commercial office building, or in a shopping plaza. One of the Shiite mosques in Houston is in a former athletic club, given to the community by a donor; its Qur'an classes on Sundays are held in the squash courts. The

Kwan Um Sa Buddhist temple, one of the oldest of the Korean Buddhist temples in Los Angeles, is in the spacious second floor quarters of an old Masonic Hall with its plush red chairs and, now, its golden images of the Buddha. The Hindu Satsang Mandali in Stockton, California meets in the hallways and rooms of a suite in a commercial building. The enormous Muslim Community Center in Chicago where over 1,000 Muslims gather weekly for the Jumah prayers is a former movie theatre.

This is the invisible change. There are thousands of small communities of immigrants that gather, trying to maintain for themselves and preserve for their children the traditions of faith that link them together culturally. They meet at first in living rooms or rented Knights of Columbus Halls, then perhaps in a building acquired for the specifically religious and cultural use of the community. A church may be ideal because it is already zoned for religious use. The Richmond Hill Sikh gurudwara in Queens meets in a former Methodist church. In Allston, Massachusetts, a Korean Zen community with martial arts as part of its meditation practice, has created a spacious zendo in the sanctuary of what was formerly a Baptist church. In Lynn, the Cambodian Buddhist community has acquired a Methodist church for its first home. An African American Muslim community in Dorchester meets in a building that was a church, then a synagogue and is now the Masjid al Qur'an. On the whole, a passerby would not notice 90 percent of the thousands of Hindu, Buddhist or Muslim religious centers in our cities and towns.

In the last decade, however, the new religious landscape has started to become visible. Hindus began building traditional Hindu temples, sited on hills like the Sri Venkatesvara temple in Penn Hills outside Pittsburgh, the Rama temple on a hill in the Chicago suburb of Lemont, or the Balaji Temple in the Malibu Hills of California. They built suburban temples in Boston, Atlanta and Albany, in Lanham, Maryland, and San Antonio, Texas. The white temple towers are covered with the images of

the gods and goddesses. Buddhist temples are also being built and therefore becoming visible in a new way: the Providence Zen Center in Cumberland, R.I.; the Chuang Yen monastery in Kent, New York; Wat Thai in North Hollywood, California. The most spectacular is the Hsi Lai Temple, the largest temple in the western hemisphere, built by the Chinese Pure Land community on a hill top in Hacienda Heights, California. It covers 14 acres of land and includes a monastery, an educational wing, a conference center and a huge main shrine room with thousands of Buddhas set in niches around the walls.

The first mosque built as such in the United States was dedicated by Lebanese and Syrian immigrants in Cedar Rapids, Iowa, in 1934. The Muslim population then was very small. When President Eisenhower attended the dedication of the National Mosque on Embassy Row in Washington in 1957, he spoke of the mosque as an expression of the important relation of the U.S. with the Muslim world. Today the U.S. is part of the Muslim world. There are new mosques in the United States designed and built by American architects, like the Islamic Center at 96th Street and Third Avenue in New York designed by Skidmore, Owings & Merrill. In Toledo a mosque rises from the cornfield just off an Interstate highway. In New Orleans, Tempe, Houston and Portland there are examples of American Islamic architecture.

The second question of the Pluralism Project serves to remind all of us that the history of religions is not over—it is still happening before our very eyes. What is Hinduism becoming in the U.S., in Pittsburgh and suburban Chicago? Religions are not fixed entities that are passed intact from generation to generation, culture to culture. On the contrary, religions are more like rivers—dynamic, ever changing, splitting, converging. How these traditions are changing in the U.S. is fascinating research, making the comparative study of religion in 20th Century America a field of study in itself.

*continued on page 49*

# Debacle at Waco

*Print and Broadcast, National and Local, Journalism Displayed Its Unseemly Side*

BY WENDELL RAWLS

If you want to feel sadness and anger and embarrassment and chagrin about being a journalist, just get on the other side of an event and watch other journalists operate. The more you know about the event the deeper you will experience those feelings.

After the raid on the Branch Davidian compound by agents of the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco and Firearms near Waco, Texas, it took almost 60 days before more than a couple of newspapers raised serious questions about the actions of press and television reporters, editors and photographers before, during and after the debacle.

Small wonder.

A brief sample of what occurred in both national and local print and electronic media shows, for example, that major national news organizations quickly tapped Col. Charles Beckwith, the commander of the abortive hostage rescue mission in Iran, one of the most disastrous failures in U.S. military history, to pontificate about how a civilian law enforcement action should be carried out against some of our own citizens. The fact that he was egregiously off base mattered not. He stirred controversy and sowed conflict (read "drama") and the news outlets lapped it up like a baby slurping Pablum.

Newsweek Magazine determined (incorrectly) that ATF agents were killed in friendly fire from other ATF agents, using the kind of bullets the ATF does not use. Shooting from helicopters flying two or three thousand feet away and armed only with pistols. Remarkable marksmanship worthy of a story itself. The story of friendly fire, however, was rubbish.

Other reporters told the ATF that they were using information from a "ballistics expert" who had done work for Soldier of Fortune magazine. Did those reporters know that ATF has traditionally been a knife in the ribs of Soldier of Fortune magazine? That the publication has been embroiled for years in litigation stemming from murders-for-hire that grew out classified ads for hit-men in cases solved by the ATF?

The New York Times and other publications reported that ATF spokeswoman Sharon Wheeler in Texas had alerted the local media about the raid in advance. The reporters of the Times and other publications asked the local news directors and editors whether Ms. Wheeler had contacted them. They failed, however, to ask what she said. What she actually did was call Dallas media outlets (90 miles from Waco) to obtain weekend telephone contacts in case a significant action took place. She did not mention Waco or Branch Davidians or religious cults or even guns. Had reporters actually interviewed the news directors or city editors, they would have discovered that the ATF spokeswoman told them nothing and that they had indeed concluded that there was probably going to be some kind of drug raid in the Dallas area. Otherwise, they would have dispatched reporters and camera crews to Waco. The stories were totally discredited.

Two months after the raid, CNN was covering the Congressional testimony of ATF and FBI officials by using a trial lawyer from Washington (the same one who was their "expert" on the William Kennedy Smith rape trial) as some kind of instant expert on what happened in Waco. And there she was on-screen

filling millions of Americans and millions more around the world with misinformation, stating as fact that the ATF spokesperson alerted the local media in advance of the February 28 raid.

With apologies to Casey Stengel, does anybody do any original reporting around here? Does anybody give a damn about journalistic responsibility and truth?

The sad answer: not enough.

As the desperate reach for ratings and readers intensifies, the line between journalism and entertainment is crossed. And the ever-increasing search for conflict/drama instead of truth/context will lead further away from the goal of fully informing the public and more toward the tabloidization of mainstream journalism in newspapers and television and will weaken and eventually discredit both.

While the days of siege and negotiation dragged from one to 51, it became apparent to an observer that journalists were spending much of their time interviewing other journalists, swapping gossip at lunch and dinner and reporting it. The road to Mount Carmel came to resemble a Florida highway near Cape Canaveral in the early spaceshot days—rank upon rank of telephoto lenses aimed at the identical target. It was the same kind of mindset that led to what quickly became press conference journalism for virtually everyone except The Houston Chronicle and The Dallas Morning News.

---

*Wendell Rawls, a Pulitzer Prize-winning reporter and editor for The Philadelphia Inquirer and The New York Times, is now writing and producing motion pictures and living in Atlanta.*

If it were not so stupid, it would be almost amusing to listen to reporters argue that the government "bad guys" should be distrusted more than a 33-year-old ninth grade dropout rock guitarist who is having sex with 10-year-old girls, impregnating 12-year-olds, beating 2-year-olds, stockpiling grenade launchers and a million rounds of ammunition, making machine guns and hand grenades, marrying more than a dozen women including several already married, signing his name "Yahweh," claiming to be Jesus Christ, insisting that he alone understands the Book of Revelation.

I had a unique role in this pageant. I was the associate producer and chief researcher for the NBC television movie, "In the Line of Duty: Ambush at Waco." I had unusually good access to documentation and interviews and provided the journalism for a screenwriter and a director to dramatize.

And I had considerable exposure to the news media, the kind of exposure others have routinely. I saw a reporter for a prominent national magazine give his article to the subject of the article to "fix what needs to be fixed." I gave very few interviews and was misquoted in every single one. I was interviewed by a national correspondent for The Chicago Tribune, who has been based in Los Angeles for the last nine months and has never heard of Bakersfield. I saw a Tulsa photographer blatantly and repeatedly misrepresent himself so he could get pictures that were published in The National Enquirer.

While some journalists performed sloppily and inaccurately and dishonestly, others were just irresponsible. A close examination of the roles of local newspaper and television staffs discloses that they played roles that were central elements of the disaster at Mount Carmel, even arguably caused it.

It was a local television journalist, after all, who, federal agents say, has admitted that he "inadvertently" provided the tip to a member of the cult—postal worker David Jones—that ATF agents were on their way to the compound for "a big gunfight." But that act

was preceded by even more unusual, even unprecedented, acts by The Waco Tribune-Herald Newspaper.

A little history is in order for perspective and context so that we may better understand what the media did and the implications of those actions, or inactions as the case may be.

Vernon Howell, a.k.a. David Koresh, first came to public notice in late 1987 when he led seven other men in a gun battle assault against the former leader of the Branch Davidians, George Roden, to take over the Mount Carmel ranch compound. During their two-week trial in 1988 for attempted murder, Howell said he was the only one who had shot at Roden—who was depriving them of land rightfully theirs—and that the other seven had fired into the air. The seven were acquitted. Howell got a hung jury and the sheriff had to return all their guns, mostly assault rifles. The Waco Tribune-Herald gave shallow, featurish coverage of the trial and then paid scant attention to the cult for the next four years.

In early 1992, an official of the Texas Division of Children's Protective Services in Waco received from her counterpart in Michigan a set of documents that had recently surfaced in a child custody trial. The case involved a 10-year-old girl whom the father wanted removed from the Mount Carmel compound where she was living with her mother. The mother had become one of the many wives of Vernon Howell, a.k.a. David Koresh, and she was preparing the child to be taken soon into the "House of David" as the youngest and newest wife.

Among the documents were copies of trial testimony and almost a dozen sworn affidavits from former members of the Mount Carmel Branch Davidians who had broken with Howell and were trying to warn others away. They detailed allegations of child abuse and sexual molestation; they warned of a massive buildup of weapons, ammunition and explosives; they talked of Howell's threats of violence in the Waco community and his preparations for his followers' mass suicide. The affidavits

had first been given to U.S. State Department officials in Australia, where most of the dissidents lived.

While one copy of the documents was travelling through welfare offices from Michigan to Texas, another copy was making its way from the State Department through the Department of Justice to the ATF office in Austin, whose territory includes Waco. A third copy found its way to The Waco Tribune-Herald.

Koresh was well known to the journalists in town, or should have been. Aside from his trial for attempted murder, he frequented the town's media hangout, the Chelsea Street Pub, which offered live rock bands to whom he tried to peddle guitars and other music equipment. He had friends among radio and television personalities and was part of Waco's mostly drab local color. He occasionally was interviewed about religion or his beliefs on radio talk shows, but was otherwise dismissed as an inconsequential blip on the Texas plains.

The problem for child welfare workers was that most of the allegations of child abuse were outdated and against children who were now older or had moved out of state. When they checked the others at school and at the compound, the bruises were either minor or healed. The FBI and the ATF needed proof of federal crimes, of which child abuse is not one.

ATF agents in Austin, who work for the Houston office, started investigating Howell on gun charges in the early spring of 1992 after receiving copies of the affidavits, talking with the sheriff in Waco and then getting a report from a United Parcel Service driver who was delivering a package "to David Koresh" when the box broke to disclose about 50 "pineapple-type" grenade hulls. The agents began tracking Koresh's gun and explosives purchases.

A couple of months later, the newspaper assigned two reporters to check on the allegations in the affidavits, mostly by telephone. By Christmas of 1992, both the newspaper and the ATF agents had finished the bulk of their investigating. Their paths had crossed a few times and it would be naive in the extreme

not to think each had a fair idea what the other was doing. The ATF knew it had a case and decided to try to infiltrate the compound to determine firsthand how many and what kind of weapons were inside and the best way to secure and repossess them. Editor Bob Lott says the newspaper was re-writing and editing and getting its information in shape for publication.

Somewhere along the line, ATF agents asked the newspaper to hold off publishing its series of articles. Lott says the ATF made more than one such request and that he agreed each time.

One of President John F. Kennedy's loudest laments was that The New York Times agreed with his request not to disclose his plan for the Bay of Pigs invasion of Cuba when the newspaper learned of it. I think we always make a mistake when we take on more of a public burden than that of responsibly informing the public and instead become complicit in the responsibilities of government and governing.

By the end of January, Lott says, the series was ready to be published, but he held off again at the request of the Bureau, who now had two undercover agents working inside the compound. Then three weeks later, even though the series was ready to run, one of Lott's reporters called Koresh for (another?) interview. That was on Monday, February 22. When the alarmed ATF agents learned of that, they contacted the newspaper for another meeting. The meeting came on Wednesday, February 24, at The Tribune-Herald offices and was attended this time by the chief of security for Cox Enterprises, the Atlanta-based newspaper, television and car-auction chain that owns The Waco Tribune-Herald.

Since the ATF was that day beginning intensive training at Ft. Hood for a possible raid on the Mount Carmel compound, an assault that was planned for the following Monday morning, March 1, the agents wanted the newspaper to continue to hold off just a few more days and not publish anything that might incite Koresh and his Davidians to precipitous action or preparedness.

But Lott, who acknowledged in an interview in his office that he and his staff had heard rumors about probable ATF action on March 1, suddenly told the ATF agent that he could not promise to hold off publication of the series without a guarantee of action against Koresh by the ATF.

The ATF agent reiterated what the newspaper already had known for some time: that his organization was involved in a serious, active investigation of Koresh and possible criminal activity at Mount Carmel, as it had been for the previous several months and every day since the newspaper had agreed to delay publication. But he said the ATF had not yet obtained a search warrant for the compound and that he could not, therefore, guarantee when or if the Bureau would take action against the Davidians. But in exchange for more time, he promised that the newspaper would not be beaten on the story and that a reporter and photographer could accompany the agents for exclusive coverage when the time came.

For his part, Lott refused to say when The Tribune-Herald would go to press with its series. But he said it would not occur within one-to-seven days and that he would give the ATF advance notice.

One thing the ATF agents did not know was that Lott and The Waco Tribune-Herald and Cox Newspapers had spent tens of thousands of dollars and months of reporter hours on a major investigative series about televangelists some years earlier, only to have The Charlotte Observer break a series on Jim and Tammy Faye Bakker a week or so ahead of them. Charlotte won a Pulitzer and the Waco series was quickly forgotten—except by Lott and a few people in Central Texas and Atlanta.

The ATF agent left the newspaper offices and told his fellow agents that night that he anticipated that the newspaper would begin its series on Sunday, because all newspapers begin major series on Sundays, their biggest circulation day.

The next day, Thursday, February 25, Lott wrote the stinging editorial that would accompany part one of the series. In it he leads with a complaint

about inaction from "enforcers of the law," and asks "How long before they will act?"

Then, after holding the seven-part series for about a month at the request of the ATF, and after hearing strong rumors that the ATF would be raiding in four days, the newspaper suddenly and inexplicably decided it could wait not longer to publish. And did the newspaper give the ATF advance notice as it had promised?

Yes. Maybe four hours worth. According to Lott, he went through "an intermediary" and informed the ATF on Friday night that it could pick up Part One when the first edition rolled off the presses a few minutes past midnight Saturday morning.

Saturday? Why Saturday? Whoever worked eight months on an investigative series and started Part One on a Saturday, the lowest circulation day of the week? Using Lott's figures, The Waco Tribune-Herald's Sunday circulation is almost 50 percent greater than that of other days. So again, why Saturday?

For security reasons, Lott said. They were concerned about Koresh's reaction to the series, and, knowing that the Davidians were heavily armed, they wanted to start publication on a day when the newspaper building would have very low civilian and employee traffic exposed to danger in case of retaliation.

But isn't that another reason to start the series on Sunday? There's zero civilian and employee traffic in a newspaper office on Sunday morning.

"We wanted two days," he said.

One suspects that what he really wanted was three days—three days of articles in the series before he anticipated ATF raid on Monday morning, March 1. Three days of articles like the above-the-fold, top-right, Page 1, copy-righted article with the headline that read: "THE LAW WATCHES, BUT HAS DONE LITTLE."

One also suspects that when the raid came the newspaper would try to take credit for it. That seems to be one of the things Pulitzer Prize juries appreciate: results.



When the newspaper series started on Saturday, with charges of child abuse, sexual molestation of young girls and polygamy and provocative cutlines such as, "A cult member told relatives that authorities won't ever take the cult's children without a fight;" and such billboard quotes as, "We're doing what we're doing and nobody's going to stop us," ATF leaders decided to move up their raid by a day to Sunday instead of either aborting the operation or waiting until Koresh had read God-knows-what more of the newspaper allegations and became even more suspicious, defensive and hunkered down.

So Sunday comes and the raid is planned for about 9:45 a.m. The vast majority of the agents, including all the Special Response team members who were training to enter the compound, leave Ft. Hood's urban warfare center shortly after dawn for the 60-miles trip to Waco. But about the time they are gathering at a staging area in Waco, reporters for the newspaper and one local television station are gathering on the road leading to Mount Carmel.

It develops that a member of an emergency medical service company has told somebody at the television station with whom she is friendly that the medical response teams have been put on call and why. In providing her tip, she uses a telephone that is taping her conversation. The television crewman tells his friend the newspaper reporter about the tip.

At 8:30 Sunday morning reporters, photographers and even the city editor from the newspaper (seven in all) are on the road to the compound in three cars, one of which is decorated with the newspaper's name on the side. It approaches within 300 yards of the compound and pulls into the driveway to the house where ATF undercover agents have been staying and where ATF snipers are currently preparing for the raid. They chase off the newspeople.

Meanwhile, in the hour from 8:30 a.m. to 9:30 a.m. before the raid, five telephone calls are made into the Mount Carmel compound from telephone numbers owned by The Waco Tribune-Herald. Reportedly the calls were made from cellular telephones.

Authorities say that newspaper officials have explained that the calls were from reporters seeking reaction to the newspaper series from Koresh and the Davidians. Calling for reaction to Part Two of a series at 8:30 a.m. on Sunday morning? Five times? In an hour? Now is that true diligence, or just exceptionally early deadlines on Sunday?

Even if none of the Davidians sees the marked newspaper car or are curious about the sudden rash of incoming calls on Sunday morning, they are soon to be alerted much more acutely.

While the newspaper reporters are getting in the way at the ATF undercover house, down the road a piece, a mailman is flagged by television newsmen and told that he should not go up to Mount Carmel because there is about to be a big shootout between ATF agents and "those religious nuts." The grateful postman thanks them for the tip and

drives directly to the compound. It turns out that the postal employee is David Jones, a member of the cult and David Koresh's brother-in-law. He arrives at the compound just after the ATF undercover agent has left.

Forty-five minutes later, the ATF arrives and is met with a fusillade of bullets from Davidians dressed in black and armed to the teeth. The raid was planned to be completed in one minute. But two minutes after the ATF agents arrived, four agents were dead and 16 were wounded. The final shots were fired early that evening.

The next day, as the world of journalism descended on the dead-at-the-core city on the banks of the Brazos River, The Waco Tribune-Herald published all four of the remaining parts of its series before the story was taken away from it. Forever. ■

## NIEMAN REPORTS

AT HARVARD UNIVERSITY

### Setting Standards in Journalism With Articles of Lasting Interest

Coming in Fall Edition

## The African Media

In a Changing Southern Africa: an Update

A special conference co-sponsored by the Nieman Foundation, the African-American Institute and the International Women's Media Foundation, Harare, Zimbabwe, July 1-2, 1993.

# The Lecher, the Witch and the Weirdo

*The Mainstream Press Distorts Alternative Religions  
By Reporting Only Deviant Behavior*

BY NANCY E. BERNHARD

After last winter's showdown in Waco, the World Trade Center bombing and the murder of Dr. David Gunn, a reader of the mainstream press could well believe that religion was the prime source of criminal behavior. Described as "the tie that binds killings" (*The Boston Globe*) and "a fortress of merciless hatred" (*Time*), religion was portrayed as a breeding ground for social pathology, as the cradle of crusades.

Naturally most Christians, Muslims and pro-life activists denounced the violence committed by their extremist brothers. And who can resist condemning the faith of a guy who loves MTV, hoards automatic weapons and claims to be Jesus Christ?

But the coverage of these events highlights a pattern of distortion in reporting on religion outside the familiar outlines of established churches. Exotic or alternative religious groups make headlines only when they exhibit deviant or criminal behavior. When we hear about religious practice carried on without benefit of ordained clergy and a building fund, its adherents are typically abusing children, sacrificing animals, sharing sexual partners, walking on coals, or braying at the moon. With or without the reporter's intent, such coverage reinforces mainstream norms about reli-

gious and social behavior and creates the impression that all nontraditional or exotic belief is lecherous, moronic, or illegal.

Sensationalism certainly fuels this selectivity. It focuses attention on the bizarre and fosters the breathless tone of the coverage. But the consequences of this familiar charge are complex. Despite a newsroom culture that rewards rationalism, skepticism and secularism, the press routinely arbitrates morality. By covering some groups and not others, by treating some groups favorably and others critically, the press marks the boundaries of acceptable and deviant behavior. While many people condemn the sensationalism that seems ever to expand the boundaries of legitimate subjects, the press does not cover the aberrant or the grisly neutrally; it

judges them aberrant or grisly. Within sensationalism we find passionately policed normative beliefs.

The coverage of the World Trade Center bombing, the Waco standoff, New Age religion and Satanist child abuse highlight some norms that operate in mainstream coverage of alternative religion. We learn that Christianity is more acceptable than other religions, but that deviant Christians are less tolerable than deviants of other faiths; charismatic religious leaders are charlatans, and religion properly entails suffering and sacrifice. Additionally, the press is apt to label anyone with a strong position in religious terms, implying that all religious people are extremists.

## What Is Normal Religion?

The term 'cult' often serves as shorthand for alternative religion. J. Gordon Melton, a leading scholar of cults, defines the term's popular meaning as "a pejorative used to describe certain religious groups outside of the mainstream of Western religion." The unfamiliar is equated with the deviant. Foreign religions newly visible in the United States such as Hinduism or Islam can be perceived as cults, as can splinter groups from more familiar denominations. Among scholars, the term 'cult' more neutrally denotes a religious group unfamiliar to the dominant culture.

Some sociologists define long-established institutions such as the Mormon or Christian Science churches as cults. If we include 4,000,000 Mormons, an unpublished but presumably large number of Christian Scientists, as well as 4,000,000 Muslims, 750,000 Hindus and over 600,000 Buddhists as cult mem-



*Nancy E. Bernhard is Henry Luce Fellow in Theology at the Center for the Study of Values and Public Life at Harvard Divinity School. She is completing a manuscript entitled, Official Information: Television News Reports the Cold War, 1947-1955.*

bers, we approach a larger percentage of the population than can be considered deviant.

Using the social science definition of a cult as a religiously innovative group, Melton estimates that 500 to 600 cults operate in the U.S today, representing a total formal membership of 150,000 to 200,000 people. These range from well-funded groups like Scientology and the Unification Church to small, one-of-a-kind groups. Since over 90 percent of people who join cults leave them within a few years, the number of people who have been involved in a cult at some point in their lives is actually much higher. Many people may hold unusual beliefs but never affiliate on that basis. Formal membership in an identifiable group is the tip of the alternative religion iceberg.

If a cult is defined as a group outside the norms of mainstream Western religion, the definition of such norms is paramount, yet these norms are always implicit and often misleading. For instance, is a literal or symbolic understanding of Biblical truth normative? In his recent book on prophecy belief in American culture, "And Time Shall Be No More," Paul Boyer shows how widespread is the expectation that the world will end in the near future as it is written in the Bible. In a 1983 Gallup poll, 62 percent of Americans, including 50 percent of college graduates, expressed "no doubts" that Jesus will return bodily to earth. In 1988, 80 percent said they believed they will appear before God on Judgment Day. These figures suggest that most Americans regard the Bible as literally true. In that case, David Koresh was far closer to the mainstream of American religious belief than most reporters ever hinted. As Jan Jarhoe of Texas Monthly quipped on The New York Times op-ed page, "Here, all sorts of folks talk for God."

In the preface to "Under God: Religion and American Politics," Garry Wills notes the difference between *mainstream* religious belief, which has always been evangelical, and *mainline*, or more rationalistic beliefs found in affluent suburbs. Wills argues that most reporters mistake mainline for mainstream religion and are thus utterly

unprepared to interpret political life, let alone religious life. A 1980 survey of leading journalists by the conservative Media Research Center found that although 80 percent were raised in a religious tradition, 80 percent seldom or never attended religious services and nearly half claimed no religious affiliation. This contrasts with Gallup's report that 42 percent of Americans attend religious services weekly and that 65 percent are affiliated with religious institutions.

Americans also subscribe to "New Age" beliefs in suprisingly large numbers. Gallup reports that 20-35 percent of the public believe they have had a past life experience and 5-10 percent profess experience with other New Age practices such as the channelling of spirits or the power of crystals. In 1987 New Age Magazine reported a circulation of 130,000, substantially higher than that of The New Republic. An estimated 100,000 people worship the Goddess, an ancient deity of natural beauty and creativity, and 2,500 self-proclaimed witches live in Salem, Massachusetts, alone.

Taken together with the significant declines in mainline denominations like Methodism and Presbyterianism in the last 20 years, increased immigration from Asia and the Middle East and reforms within more familiar denominations, the growing plurality and variety of American religious practice necessitates a redefinition of "mainstream." Further, the dual conception of mainstream religions and deviant cults could profitably be replaced with the notion of a progression of religious groups from traditional to innovative. But the press corps seems singularly ill-equipped to explain or even identify these trends. The dominant news frame through which alternative religions are interpreted is one of disdain and ridicule.

### A Christian Nation

The most forceful norm running through coverage of alternative religion is the dominance and sanction of Christianity above other traditions. A corollary to this norm is that deviant Chris-

tians are less tolerable than deviants of other faiths, probably because we identify their difference from normative beliefs and practices more readily.

In comparing the coverage of the Waco siege and the World Trade Center bombing, several commentators have found that different news conventions governed the coverage of extremist Christians and Muslims. Derrick Z. Jackson of The Boston Globe noted that most headlines linked the New York perpetrators with Islam but failed to link the Waco group with Christianity. He contrasted USA Today's "Break in case points to Muslim radicals," and The Wall Street Journal's "Short tangled trail leads to bomb suspect tied to an angry sheik: FBI devises a ruse to snare Muslim extremist in blast at New York's towers" with USA Today's "Sect Leader Charismatic, 'Dangerous'" and The New York Times's "Chess in Three Dimensions: Negotiating With Cult Chief." Jackson concluded, "Why headline writers do not tar Koresh and [Dr. David Gunn's killer Michael] Griffin as 'Christian crazies' the way they refer to 'Muslim extremists' speaks to religious arrogance. Deep down, we cannot tolerate the thought that the majority religion of the United States can be used in as evil a way as we seem to presume Islam is." Most Americans, including reporters, learn from their own experience that most Christians are not violent, but know about Muslims only from news reports about terrorists from Iran to Jersey City.

Jackson's point, that reporters should resist stereotyping all Muslims as violent extremists, is well taken. But although David Koresh and his followers are not labelled as Christians, the terms used to describe them, 'sect' and 'cult,' also carry clear derogatory connotations. These terms establish the aberrance of the group's religion, affirm its distance from normative Christianity. Time reassured its readers that the Waco group was twice removed from "the mainstream Seventh-day Adventist Church," being an "obscure offshoot of the Branch Davidians, which was a mutation of an earlier Adventist splinter

group." While the headlines identified Islam with violence, they emphasized the deviance of violent Christians.

Christian publications protested even the slightest connection of the Branch Davidians with legitimate Christianity. James M. Wall wrote in *The Christian Century*, "Even when the media avoid the adjective 'Christian' in front of 'cult,' the linkage with God (as in [Time headline] "In the Name of God") coupled with Biblical apocalypticism leaves the impression that Koresh is some kind of Christian—which denigrates the faith of millions of believers." The *New York Times* carried stories about other Branch Davidian groups and about residents of Waco who proclaimed their remoteness from and disapproval of the besieged group. The coverage left no doubt that they were religiously, geographically and socially exiled.

Even attempts to show the prevalence of apocalyptic cults emphasized their deviance. People magazine profiled five groups akin to the Branch Davidians in a story titled "The Strangers Among Us." The introduction played on fears of the shrinking distance between "us" and "them": "It is comforting to think that such tragedies always happen somewhere else and that the groups responsible couldn't possibly be living next door. But sometimes they are." The main source for each profile was a disaffected former follower with a grudge. The leaders were portrayed as "the kind of guru who give cults a bad name," a kidnapper, two greedy deceivers and an abuser. The sensational frame for the story is that cults are everywhere, but its normative message reinforces cults' deviance.

In an article in *The Nation* lamenting the press's chronic misrepresentation of homegrown religious sects, Robert S. Fogarty argued that messianic sects have been a staple of American history and that reporting that characterized the Branch Davidians as a bizarre aberration came from a "mindless vacuum of historical and religious ignorance." He asserted that the religion of the Muslim fundamentalists was actually given more respect than that of Koresh: "Omar Abdel Rahman is referred to as a sheik, not a 'cult leader,' and there is no

talk of 'brainwashing' or the horrors of spending long hours reading the Koran."

Unsurprisingly then, the operative news frame for the Waco standoff became David Koresh's illegitimacy as a Christian and as a religious leader. His lifestyle, particularly his requirement that male members of the group remain chaste while he married 19 women including young teens, made for a sensational copy. But this frame provided no explanation for the pull of his leadership. It presumed his followers were stupid or weak, but not religious. The neglect of the religious context for their obedience and the disdain of Koresh's faith by law enforcement officials as well as the media contributed to the failure to anticipate the group's collective suicide.

We learned of Koresh's opportunistic fakery and the poor victims in his thrall. The lead to "Cult of Death," *Time's* initial story on the siege, began "David Koresh—high school dropout, rock musician, polygamist preacher—" cast him as someone who had failed in American society. He couldn't finish school and he couldn't make it as a musician, so he pretended to be the Messiah to get the adulation he craved.

Evidence for his fakery came from the double standards he imposed on his followers. While he lived in comfort, he controlled their diets, their sexual lives and their minds. "Beer, meat, air conditioning and MTV, taboo for others, were available to him." The prestige press also highlighted Koresh's apparent contradictions. Despite the text's emphasis on the evolution of the Branch Davidian sect, a front page *New York Times* article was headlined "'Messiah' Fond of Rock, Women and Bible." The article implied that the leader's "wavy hair, soft eyes behind wire-framed glasses and boyish grin" which proved "attractive to women" explained why women would obey when he forbade them to leave the compound. The article completely ignored the religious derivation of his leadership, mentioning only his seductiveness and "a long struggle with other aspiring leaders that included a 1987 gun battle."

The news frame of fakery freed reporters from providing a religious context for the group. If its social structure was only a pretense to gratify Koresh's sexual appetites, then his charismatic leadership needed no explanation. If Koresh was simply a master manipulator, the group members' adherence did not have to be taken seriously. If his biblically based apocalypticism was just an excuse to stockpile arms, then Christianity remained a benign influence. But without a religious framework in which the forces of good fought the forces of evil in a final battle, the group's final act could not be explained.

In the aftermath of the fire a few reporters noted that apocalyptic Christianity provided missing context for the Branch Davidians. The *New York Times's* Peter Steinfeld interpreted the Book of Revelation in an article entitled, "Bible's Last Book Was Key to Cult: Images of Fire in Revelation Became a Haunting Script for Apocalypse in Waco." The *Times* also ran an op-ed article called "Blind Secularism," where Neal Stephenson asked, "Has our society really secularized to the point where we are so bewildered by people with sincere religious faith?" One might more pointedly ask why the press is so dismissive of faith. Even when reporters chided the FBI for failing to consult cult experts on Koresh's motivations and psychology, they rarely acknowledged their own negligence of religion.

### Better You Should Feel Bad

A similar frame of fakery also dominates mainstream coverage of New Age religion. Leaders and adherents are ridiculed as selfish, materialistic and simple-minded. For such a secular group, the press apparently clings to traditional notions about religion, that it properly entails suffering and sacrifice. In comparison, coverage of closely related movements in New Age medicine show little of the ridicule heaped on New Age spirituality.

Many reports deem New Age belief illegitimate because it feels good or seems easy. An early *U.S. News & World Report* profile of the movement probed the "big and bizarre business" of Ameri-

cans looking for "supernatural answers to real-life problems." In a 1987 cover story that introduced New Age beliefs to many people between the coasts, Time framed it in shallowness and credulity: "Somehow, the New Agers believe, there must be some secret and mysterious shortcut or alternative path to happiness and health. And nobody ever really dies."

The New Republic interpreted the movement in a piece entitled, "Moronic Convergence: The moral and spiritual emptiness of the New Age." Richard Blow condemned the focus on self that he observed overtaking the '60's generation of social reformers as they reached middle-age. "They don't have to march in the streets to change the world. They can do that from the comfort of their own couches.... In the New Age lexicon, there is no mention of sacrifice, duty or responsibility." To be legitimate, apparently religion must be systematic, difficult and entail public service.

An associated theme is the greed and opportunism of New Age merchandisers and the materialism of their followers. A Boston Globe article on a firewalking seminar profiled its creator as follows: "Self-help guru Tony Robbins made his first million before he was 25; he perfected his you-can-do-it shtick with firewalk seminars en route to real estate deals and late-night television infomercials." Time cited astrologically minded stockbrokers and an investment banker who speaks of her past life as evidence of the illegitimacy of New Age beliefs. When sources disputed such charges, the magazine dismissed them: "New Age fantasies often intersect with mainstream materialism, the very thing that many New Age believers profess to scorn."

The disdain apexed in coverage of the "Harmonic Convergence" of planets on August 16, 1987. Newsweek's piece, entitled "The End of the World (Again)" explained the event this way: "If Harmonic Convergence fails, a 25-year period of increasing earthly catastrophe will ensue and by 2012 we will all die. But it's OK. All you have to do to forestall Armageddon is and we can't stress this too strongly, get together with some

friends and hold hands and hum and everything will be fine." Even when participants explained that they didn't really expect cataclysmic events to occur, but that gathering in a beautiful place to envision a positive future for the planet gave them satisfaction, reporter Bill Barol condemned their sentiment as wasted. On the magazine's Lifestyle news (not commentary) page, Barol wrote, "Making yourself feel good about the world is not the same thing as improving the world. Want to think a good thought? Think about 144,000 people volunteering an hour a week to work in shelters for the homeless. That would be something to hum about."

Certainly some New Age projects are money-making scams and some adherents have utterly suspended their disbelief. But in comparing the coverage of New Age religion to the closely related movement in New Age medicine, the intensely normative nature of this coverage and its disdain for spirituality comes clear.

New Age medicine, like New Age religion, combines elements of Eastern and Western traditions according to the needs and preferences of the subject. Many practices such as acupuncture, massage, herbal medicine and macrobiotics have little substantiation in Western science but the press has greeted this movement much more favorably than it has New Age religion. Time's 1991 cover story, "Why New Age Medicine is Catching On," acknowledged a range of credibility in the movement's claims and practitioners, a complexity it ignored in New Age religion. The warm reception given Bill Moyers' PBS series "Healing and the Mind" suggests that the cultural and scientific authority of big-name journalists and well-credentialed Western doctors legitimizes alternative medicine more readily than the unanointed leaders of New Age religion.

Other cultural norms come into play. Medical problems are more readily identifiable and thus more socially acceptable than spiritual difficulties. We think of medical problems as originating outside of the individual's control, whereas spiritual problems are by definition failures of the spirit. Seeking help for medi-

cal problems carries no stigma of failure. Acceptance of alternative medicine also fits Americans' obsession with their bodies and with the latest therapeutic fads, magic diets and revolutionary exercise.

The press thus deems it acceptable to seek hodgepodge, self-centered alternatives to traditional medicine but contemptible or frivolous to seek alternatives to traditional religion. Time explained the growing popularity of New Age medicine in terms of growing dissatisfaction with Western medicine. "If the doctor has written you off, where on earth can you turn?" it asks. Complaining about the medical establishment is so fashionable even the AMA membership agrees it need substantial reform. But less universal complaints about the religious establishment have not yet legitimized the search for more self-styled alternatives.

A reporter can retain his or her skepticism and still ask what New Age beliefs and practices offer a serious, reasonable person that more traditional religions do not. Perhaps New Age adherents seek a different sense of community than established churches, with their committees and regulations, can offer. Perhaps the Harmonic Convergence represented for some participants a hopeful but not complacent approach to the environmental crisis, a middle ground between dire alarmism on one hand and faith that God or technology will fix it on the other. But if the reporter believes that innovative spiritual quests are always delusional, we will never learn from the press why so many people participate in New Age religion or what they gain from it.

### God Save Us From Believers

One more case illustrates the press's aptitude for sensationalism and contempt in covering alternative religion. In the 1980's, women began to come forward with stories of past sexual abuse at the hands of Satanist cults. A few victims published accounts of their torture and use as 'breeders' to provide infants for ritual sacrifice. By the mid-80's the stories focused on present-day allegations at day-care centers, most

famously the McMartin preschool case in California. After similar charges surfaced in Saskatchewan, a Maclean's 1992 cover story on "The Satan Factor" explained (without attribution) that "Satanists believe that the ultimate act of their faith is to violate a child." The magazine reported that the cults' highly organized secrecy made detection difficult, but assured its readers that more information would be forthcoming with each new allegation.

At the same time, Catholic leaders began decrying the use of Satanist motifs by heavy metal rock bands, claiming that the images inspired teenagers to degradation and suicide. While newspapers and magazines reported each new charge, they often failed to note the source of the information. The book "Satan's Underground" by Lauren Stratford, which detailed the author's experiences with infant sacrifice and sold more than 130,000 copies between 1988 and 1990, was withdrawn by its publisher after anticult researchers showed it to be a fabrication. As Melton notes, conservative Christians have largely sustained the Satanist tradition in their zeal to combat it.

But mental health workers also noted the growing number of women unaffiliated with church groups who declared themselves victims of a worldwide network of devil worshippers. The Los Angeles Times reported that survivor Jacquie Balodis asserts that she knows 500 others in Los Angeles alone and that she receives 40 new reports each month. Public concern mounted as the tabloid press and television beat the Satanist drum. Geraldo Rivera's 1988 NBC program "Exposing Satan's Underground" was the highest-rated documentary ever aired on that network, with almost 20 million homes tuned in.

The Satanism story makes perfect tabloid fodder and its connection to a very grave issue, the sexual abuse of children, makes it newsworthy for the prestige press as well. Particularly in a religious context, child sexual abuse is probably the most taboo activity one can imagine in American society. Its new prevalence, whether allegedly at the hands of Satanists, David Koresh, or Catholic priests, may signal its increased

incidence, increased sensationalism, or increased willingness to admit that such horrors occur. The facts about the existence or the extent of Satanist abuse are still quite obscure and may remain so.

But as The Los Angeles Times stressed, despite the proliferation of allegations, law enforcement officials found no forensic evidence for these hundreds of charges. Local and federal investigators affirmed that child abuse is a serious problem, but one that almost always occurs in the home.

In the absence of material evidence, a pendulum swing began in the press coverage. Richard Gardner, Columbia University child psychiatrist, provided a widely invoked metaphor for the now ostensibly spurious Satanism scare. The Economist quoted him, "These cases have all the hallmarks of mass hysteria similar that that which took place at the time of the Salem witch trials in 1692." Gardner wrote in The Wall Street Journal that this constituted the "third great wave of hysteria" in American history after Salem and McCarthyism, carried on by the "child abuse establishment" of social workers, psychiatrists, psychologists and law enforcement officials.

A witch hunt, particularly one like the 1692 Salem witch hunt in which 19 people were put to death, is a powerful metaphor used in a stunning variety of cases by combatants and reporters. In the last few years, newspapers have invoked the witch hunt analogy with regard to the McMartin preschool case, the Tailhook incident, Lawrence Walsh's investigation of Iran-Contra, the Central Park jogger case, the search for Bill Clinton's passport files and an audit of road construction in Georgia and many other issues.

What do witches' and witch hunters represent in our society that their specters are invoked both by those charging the most odious form of abuse and

<sup>1</sup> Self-proclaimed witches vigorously disavow any connection to Satanism, yet fundamentalist Christians have been largely successful at equating the two in the public mind. The difference between pagan worship of nature or pre-Christian deities and anti-Christian Satan worship is vast, both spiritually and politically, but witches continue to be misunderstood.

those who disbelieve them? The press's universal but haphazard use of this metaphor to denote passionate partisans of any issue signals a view of religion as the last refuge of scoundrels and fanatics. Time essayist Lance Morrow explicitly attributed violent nationalist conflict to religion: "you usually find beneath its surface a religious core, some older binding energy of belief or superstition, previous to civic consciousness, previous almost to thought." Morrow believes in the paramount social norms of rationality and civic responsibility and he believes that religious people violate these norms. The Satanism scare thus conjured two basic threats to the social order he envisions, that of a perverted underworld torturing children and alternatively, that of hysterical women subverting reason. Either way, religion fuels the zealots who disorder the rational world.

Two related frames shape the coverage outlined here. On the one hand, the sensationalism and ridicule apparent in the Waco, New Age and Satanism stories fail to take religion seriously. They presume religion is a cloak for fanaticism, weakness, stupidity, selfishness, or prurience. On the other hand, the hyper-rationalism apparent in the backlash against the Satanism scare and the general meditations on religion and violence take religion as the root of all evil. Either religion reduces to pathology, or pathology reduces to religion.

This formula may represent normative belief among reporters, but it surely misrepresents the role of religion in the lives of most Americans. The obvious and onerous solution is for reporters to educate themselves about religion. The press should grant religious knowledge and experience a greater measure of respect than is evident in the coverage analyzed here. Of course David Koresh was mad. But if you never consulted the Book of Revelation you missed a big part of that story. And if you think everyone who believes in the Book of Revelation is mad, you may well miss the next one. ■

# God as City Editor

*Divine Energy Can Have a Profound Effect  
On Operation of the Newsroom*

BY JOHN S. DRISCOLL

“God dammit, I need that copy—and I need it now.”

Most of us grew up in a newsroom environment where the most frequent invoking of God's name occurred around deadline time when the city editor was trying to wrest a story from a reporter.

Now, the provocateurs who run the Neiman Reports are trying to make us journalists think in more depth about matters religious. The question I have been assigned to explore is: Does God exist in the newsroom? That's easy. The answer is yes.

The bigger question is: How does God's existence in broadcast and print newsrooms affect the way we conduct ourselves?

Of course, those who don't believe in the existence of God, period, don't have to worry about these questions. But most research shows that true non-believers make up less than 10 percent of the population.

Before answering the “how” question, it is important for each of us to meditate on our definition of “God.” Is he man? Is she woman? Is she/he a Higher Power of some sort? Only the devil would expect me to try answering those questions. Possibly we could all simply agree that God is a mystery.

For purposes of this exercise, let's just say that you begin your day in the newsroom by logging on to your computer and becoming plugged into divine energy. Pick your own password: Alleluia, Shalom, Beelzebub....

It may not slow down your life in the fast lane, but it sure changes your perspective. Most folks find it simpler to leave their religious life at the stairs of

the church or synagogue. The idea—nay, the responsibility—of living it in a newsroom makes for complications that frankly tend to give me much pause. I write not as an expert on the subject but as one who has struggled more than succeeded.

Despite much scholarship on faith and work, I have never seen the subject addressed in the mainline media.

Rev. John C. Haughey, a Jesuit stationed in Chicago, once explained it this way: “We've got to extend the sacred to the workplace, which is often the last place we want to extend it. People should expect to find God at work—in people, where there is justice, where there is need, where there is kindness, compassion, goodness or talent. These are the kinds of things that enable us to bring a sense of awe to what work is, even when it's humdrum.”

In a recent sermon at a healing service at First Church in the Jamaica Plain section of Boston, Tricia Brennan, a social worker, referred to the partnership of God and humans as “giving form to that divine desire in our daily struggles to create a just and caring world.”

Fr. Chrystomos Gunning, a Russian Orthodox priest in Waldorf, Md., once made reference to getting a glimpse of God's face with these comments: “It happens not in the pew on Sunday but in the ordinary moments of what is our daily life...at work, wearing a skirt and blouse, in a shirt and tie, in blue jeans and boots, with grease on our hands...while an arrogant co-worker makes life miserable for us...and perhaps even with the fear of losing job and work and position hanging over our head.



*Jack Driscoll, a member of the Nieman Advisory Board, was named a Vice President of The Boston Globe in March of 1933 after seven years as its Editor. He has been a reporter, sportswriter, copyeditor and supervisory editor over the last 42 years for weekly and daily newspapers and for United Press. Driscoll is national chairman of the Future of Newspapers Committee of the American Society of Newspaper Editors. He has been on the ASNE board of directors for the last three years. He and his wife, Dolores, have four daughters and one granddaughter. Jack and Dolores are Eucharistic ministers at the LaSalette National Shrine in Ipswich, MA.*



Photo by Stan Grossfeld, *The Boston Globe*

"Finding God in church and prayer is not the hard part; finding Him where we would rather not have him—that's the hard part," he said.

Let's ponder the "hard part" for a moment. The early mystics used to write about the dark night of the soul. If you are working hard yet feeling more empty, you know what that means. Indeed, there are moments when we all are alienated from the light. We are

grappling with all sorts of difficulties. They may be personal difficulties; they may be the byproduct of staring tragedy in the face in our day-in and day-out coverage of life on the streets.

The ethic of the workplace revolves around power, status, competition, compromise, financial security and inappropriate company demands, according to William E. Diehl, author of "Thank

God It's Monday," who cites the words of Charles Revson and Vince Lombardi as the the mantras of the work world.

Revson of Revlon: "I don't meet competition, I crush it."

Lombardi, the Green Bay Packers coach: "Winning is not the most important thing, it's everything."

Luckily none of us has rushed an incomplete story into print or onto the air because we were afraid the competition had the story! And none of us has been guilty of reading a memo upside down on someone's desk or packaging a presentation deceptively! I won't ask for a show of hands.

Judeo-Christian values can effectively deal with most day-to-day journalistic dilemmas, but being logged on to divine energy requires integrating one's belief in God into concrete circumstances. Generally those beliefs would be compatible with the objectives of media companies. Pierre Teilhard de Chardin, the French priest-paleontologist-philosopher, said that we have achieved success when the aims of work, product and producer are in harmony.

But if you are a photographer and someone needs medical assistance at the scene of a fire, do you get the picture or get the medic?

If you are a reporter sent to a home after a tragedy and you arrive before the minister, do you tell the wife her husband has been killed because your deadline is near?

These are everyday dilemmas.

It is at these times in particular that we need to look within ourselves for right answers. Our physical, mental and emotional dimensions are often incapable of coping. We need to learn to rely on our Inner Self.

Now we are getting to the "how."

Theologians generally agree that the ability to read your "Inner Self" requires preparation. You have to be disposed toward being in tune with God. Their formula includes regular prayer, Scripture reading, other studies, regular discussion with like-minded people in a group setting, meetings with a spiritual director and taking time to contemplate moments during your day when you have felt closest to—or furthest from God. Joseph Campbell, the my-



thology expert, referred to "peak moments" that occur throughout day as the times when we experience our True Self. Some of these moments can be rather ordinary.

The other day I was racing down the corridor to one of those important meetings. I had one foot on the elevator, when a secretary hollered to me.

"Jack," she said, "my nephew is being operated on for a tumor on his lung right at this moment. He's only 6 years old."

My antennae went up. The meeting I was heading for became meaningless (it probably was anyway). I stopped and focused on what she was telling me through tears and with trembling hands. "Please keep him in your thoughts," she said. I knew what she was asking, reassured her with a pat on the shoulder and moved on. In that moment I was simply being present to her. And I shared intimately in her struggle.

Two hours later she burst into my office, beaming. "It's all over," she said, "and it's OK. It looks non-malignant." I shared in her joy.

Unwittingly we discourage people in newsrooms from asking someone to pray for a sick child. We discourage non-physical intimacy. And yet there is a craving that we would discover if we were to scratch the surface.

One Valentine's Day I ended our editors' news conference by saying, "Instead of sending each of you a card, I just wanted to observe this day by telling you how much I care about each of you." I could not quite utter the word "love" aloud. And then I asked if anyone else wanted to say anything.

Our crusty Sports Editor didn't hesitate: "I welcome this opportunity, because I do love each one of you."

In the next few crackling moments each of the dozen or so persons at the meeting shared his or her deep feelings for each other.

In 30 years as an editor, I never mentioned God or had holy pictures in my office. In a newsroom in particular but in workplaces in general, it is my belief that what's implicit is more meaningful than what's explicit. Indeed, explicit discussions of religious matters often can trigger a turn-off.

The photograph by Stan Grossfeld, a 1992 Neiman, of an Ethiopian woman sitting on the ground, lovingly holding her dying son in her lap is my "Madonna and Child." It has graced my office wall since the day Stan returned, well before he won the 1985 Pulitzer Prize. It speaks to me every day of the suffering in the world that we are all a part of, that we have responsibility toward as journalists, every day, be it in Ethiopia or Somalia, Indiana or California.

If we look at our profession through a spiritual prism, it is my conclusion that we will cover the news differently and we will comport ourselves differently in our newsrooms.

Coverage must go beyond being essentially a reflection of the daily tragedy that surrounds us. There is more to our world than that. We are good at reporting on trends and getting better at exploring issues. But it's harder to find, cover and write about happenings that are upbeat.

In our interpersonal relations as journalists we need to be less self-centered and more team conscious. The lone-wolf syndrome seldom serves the reader or viewer.

Finally a word about the "kick-ass" syndrome. Part of our mandate is to cover change. News is change...so long as it stays out of the newsroom. Staff people say they don't like dictatorial management, then complain when the top-down system is replaced. "Give me the days when the editor used to kick ass," they say.

I think we need to be open to a different approach for one simple reason: it works better. It involves listening and caring and consensus building when appropriate and affirmation.

Clearly there is a place for calling someone on the carpet or following up on an error in a "don't-let-it-happen-again" manner. But most perpetrators find out about their errors within five minutes of entering the building, if not before they arrive. No one feels worse than the perpetrator of an error. Who tells them when they do a good job and why it was especially done well?

Psychologists have pretty firmly concluded that a pat on the back goes a lot further than a kick in the ass. B.F. Skin-

ner says that tongue-lashings might work immediately, but they produce no long-term results. "The responses to punishment are either the urge to escape, a counterattack or a stubborn apathy. These are the bad effects you get in prisons or in schools or wherever punishments are used."

I thought Vivien Ward, the prostitute in "Pretty Woman" put it best, when she said: "If people put you down enough, you start to believe it. The bad stuff is easier to believe."

What does that have to do with God in the newsroom?

Let me see if I can walk this through a step at a time.

1. Pope John Paul says that the world is "the incarnation of the love of God" and that work is "a fundamental dimension" of our existence on earth.
  2. In our newsrooms, we are co-creators, intimately entwined in a process with our fellow journalists, seeking—if I might borrow from the Army—to be all that we can be.
  3. In "The Prophet," Kahlil Gibran refers to work as "a flute through whose heart the whispering of the hours turn to music." Notice his emphasis on the heart. He continues: "All work is empty save when there is love; and when you work with love you bind yourself to yourself and to one another, and to God...Work is love made visible."
- That's the closest I can come to a glimpse of the face of God, a new kind of city editor who deserves our consideration. ■

# Catholicism

## *Troubled Relationship Between Church and Media Attributed to a Clash of Values*

BY RUSSELL SHAW

In the space of a few days last spring, "60 Minutes" aired a segment on a sex scandal involving an archbishop and U.S. News & World Report ran a cover story about a priest in whose presence statues are said to shed tears. Like it or not, even the snarliest media critic must acknowledge that the Catholic Church does a lot to create its own image.

But that is not the whole story.

Mulling this sometimes troubled relationship—media and religion in general, media and the Catholic Church in particular—one gravitates instinctively toward a safe middle ground between paranoia and Pollyanna: American journalists are not good friends of religion but not its worst enemies either. That is true but not helpful.

Let us agree that journalists are not called by their profession to be anyone's good friends or worst enemies, and certainly not to be "friendly" to religion. Perhaps, though, we also can agree that an editor at an important daily erred in telling staffers they did well not to affiliate with church or synagogue lest they suffer divided loyalties. (I heard last year of this incident from a journalist who worked at the paper for years, attended the staff meeting at which the remark was made, and later argued the question with the editor who made it.) Apparently there such a thing as fanaticism in the service of journalism as well as religion.

Instead of either friendliness or hostility toward religion on journalists' part, fairness and accuracy will do quite well. Currently, however, there is considerable testimony that a problem exists which is not all of religion's causing.

While some of this criticism no doubt is misguided, not all of it can be dismissed so easily.

Noting coverage of the Branch Davidians and of the World Trade Center bombing that virtually "conflated" armed fanatics and Islam, The New Republic says American media exhibit "habitual contempt for religion." Writing in The Wall Street Journal, the executive director of Pat Robertson's Christian Coalition, Ralph Reed, remarks (rather more predictably, to be sure): "One searches in vain for a positive portrayal of faith in modern culture."

Those are opinions. As to facts: The Washington Post contributed an exhibit to the chamber of horrors last February 1 when, providing neither evidence nor attribution, the writer of a page-one story on political activism by conservative Protestants pronounced people who make up the audience of TV evan-

gelists to be "largely poor, uneducated and easy to command." No editor challenged that ("We really screwed up," Post managing editor Robert G. Kaiser later confessed). Readers did, however, deluging the paper with angry calls. A correction the next day acknowledged that the statement had "no factual basis."

As a function of my profession (in the sense of occupation and also in the sense of religious faith), I am especially interested in how American media cover the Catholic Church. I have been responsible for the media relations of national Catholic organizations for the past 27 years (18 of them as press secretary of the National Conference of Catholic Bishops and United States Catholic Conference). In that time I have formed some impressions.

One impression concerns the serious-mindedness and integrity of most of the journalists with whom I've dealt. I am not just being nice. With very few exceptions, the news people with whom I've had professional contact have struck me as honest and intelligent souls who wanted to get the story straight. I do not know what most of them personally



*Russell Shaw, Director of Public Information, Knights of Columbus, has worked for Catholic organizations for most of his 36-year journalistic career. A summa cum laude graduate of Georgetown, he has been a reporter and information director for a half-dozen Catholic organizations, written a dozen books on religious themes and contributed to publications as diverse as L'Osservatore Romano and Our Sunday Visitor. He and his wife, Carmen Hilda Carbon, have five children.*

thought, or think, about the Catholic Church. Rarely did I sense conscious and deliberate anti-Catholicism.

Very often, though (another impression), I have found the media's handling of Catholic stories dismaying. Indeed, "dismaying" is in this context a rather feeble word. What I mainly mean is that frequently over the years the picture of the Catholic Church presented in the media has borne little resemblance to my picture of it.

To some extent, of course, the explanation lies with me, a practicing Roman Catholic on the Church's payroll. For better or worse, both things unavoidably color my vision. Still, I don't think the problem lies entirely on my side.

Take an extreme example of the kind of thing I find bothersome. Lashing out at Cardinal John O'Connor on the New York Times op-ed page over the St. Patrick's Day parade controversy (could/should organized gays and lesbians march?), Anna Quindlen castigated "church leaders who shield pedophile priests and thereby trade a facade of probity for the safety of Catholic children." Now, sex scandals involving the clergy are an ugly fact; and some members of the Catholic hierarchy, failing to grasp the nature of the problem, at first tried to shield the offenders. What has that to do with the parade? As a controversialist, Ms. Quindlen has roughly the finesse of Genghis Khan.

But, someone might object, Anna Quindlen herself is a Catholic. Indeed. Keep that in mind. It may turn out to be a clue.

Someone also might object that Quindlen is a columnist, and columnists are expected to be opinionated and provocative. Readers of the Quindlen column know they are getting Quindlen's view of things. Take it or leave it. Caveat emptor. In other words: So what?

The problem is not that easily resolved. For one thing, commentary is part of the overall mix which constitutes the media's treatment of the Catholic Church. For another thing, many people are convinced that there is a problem precisely where news coverage is concerned.

Four years ago the Knights of Columbus and the Catholic League for Religious and Civil Rights, a New York-based anti-defamation group, commissioned a study of coverage of the Church to be carried out by the Center for Media and Public Affairs under the direction of media analyst S. Robert Lichter. The study focused on four elite news organizations: The New York Times, The Washington Post, Time and the CBS Evening News. It took in three five-year segments during the past three decades (1964-68, 1974-78, 1984-88). Thus it included the closing years of the Catholic Church's epochal Second Vatican Council (1962-65) as well as major chunks of what are often called, by Catholics and others, the "postconciliar" years. Plainly this has been a period of rapid change and repeated controversy in Catholicism.

After the study was published (over two years ago), some journalists complained that whatever might be true of the Times, the Post, Time, and CBS was by no means true of them. In other words: It is unfair to media generally to suggest that faults and failings imputed to these four are common to them all. Some also objected to Lichter's methodology. These objections deserve to be considered.

First, neither the sponsors nor the authors of the study represented it as including more than it does. It would have been good to examine many more news organizations; it also would have been prohibitively expensive. If some foundation or private donor would care to subsidize this study's replication on a much broader scale, more power to them.

Second, it makes good sense to find out how these four particular news organizations covered the Catholic Church between 1964 and 1988. During that time these four were widely considered to be leaders in their respective genres. They also had a disproportionate impact by reason of their influence on opinion-leaders, including other journalists. The principle here at work here was simply this: If you cannot study everybody, study those who have the most clout.

Third, the social-science method of content analysis used in this study by the Center for Media and Public Affairs is the same method it has used in many other studies. Robert Lichter is eminently respectable, academically speaking, and the media frequently quote him and his center as responsible evaluative sources. To be sure, the methodology involves randomly sampling media coverage; it also requires qualitative judgments by the researchers. But random samples are standard practice in social science, while controls were applied to the researchers' judgments for the sake of objectivity. The methodology is sound.

The study's results were published in March 1991 by the Center for Media and Public Affairs, the Knights of Columbus, and the Catholic League. The 93-page monograph bears the title *Media Coverage of the Catholic Church*. The authors are Dr. Lichter and his colleagues, Daniel Amundson and Linda S. Lichter. What does it say?

Quite a lot, actually. Certainly it does not not lend support to the notion that overt anti-Catholicism was rampant in the Times, the Post, Time, and the CBS Evening News between 1964 and 1968. But neither does it support complacency—on anybody's part. The executive summary gives this overview:

"On most controversies involving Catholic teachings, the Church came out on the losing side of the issue debate reported in the media. Although the opinion breakdown varied from one issue to another, sources supporting the Church were in the minority on the broad range of debates involving sexual morality and Church authority that dominated the coverage. These included heated controversies over birth control, clerical celibacy, the role of women and minorities in the Church, and its response to internal dissent and issues involving freedom of expression.

"The major exception to this pattern involved ecumenical efforts, which the media treated as a kind of 'motherhood and apple pie' issue, supported by all people of good will. Even on this dimension, however, opinion was split over whether the Church was helping or hindering efforts to promote

interreligious unity. Similarly, opinion was about evenly divided on the Church's involvement in political affairs. But most of the praise was for Church pronouncements condemning war. On domestic disputes over church-state relations, most sources opposed the Church's positions or activities.

"Controversial issues were frequently presented as conflicts between the Church hierarchy, on the one side, and lower-level clergy, lay Catholics, and non-Catholics on the other. Journalists frequently approached this subject matter from a secular perspective, structuring their coverage of theological issues along the familiar lines of political reportage.

"The result was a long-running media drama that pitted a hidebound institutional hierarchy against reformers from within and without. This portrayal was reinforced by the language used to describe the Church in media accounts. The descriptive terms most frequently applied to the Church emphasized its conservative theology, authoritarian forms of control, and anachronistic approach to contemporary society....

"Ultimately, journalists are less fact-collectors than story-tellers. And the stories they tell about the Catholic Church rely on politics as much as religion for their dramatic appeal. Increasingly, the story line revolves around a beleaguered authority struggling to enforce its traditions and decrees on a reluctant minority."

That is fairly strong stuff. Is it true? And, if true, how should it be interpreted?

It can be argued that this "story line" about the Catholic Church as described by Lichter and his colleagues conforms to the facts: blaming the media is like shooting the messenger who brings bad news. It also can be argued (I so argue) that in important ways the story has had the character of a self-fulfilling prophecy: the more often it has been told, the more it has tended to become true. These two views are not mutually exclusive.

On September 17, 1991, the sponsors of the Lichter study, together with a Catholic foundation called the Our Sunday Visitor Institute, sponsored a

day-long symposium at the National Press Club in Washington to consider the study's findings. Among the speakers were Richard Harwood, then ombudsman of The Washington Post and now a Post columnist, Georgetown University political scientist Michael J. Robinson, media critic L. Brent Bozell, III, former CBS executive and USIA director Frank Shakespeare, and others. Lichter gave a summing-up, and there was unstructured discussion among the invited attendees, who included several journalists. The proceedings have been published along with the original monograph in a 256-page book with the title "Anti-Catholicism in the Media: An Examination of Whether Elite News Organizations Are Biased Against the Church" (Our Sunday Visitor, 200 Noll Plaza, Huntington, IN 46750; \$16.95).

Among the many things said on that occasion, Richard Harwood's remarks merit particular attention as a responsible and experienced journalist's account of what media do and why they do it when they cover religion and the Catholic Church.

In what I would consider the meat of his comments, Harwood began by conceding that the "secular character of our newspapers is not totally divorced from the interests or character of the people who produce them." Noting an earlier Lichter study of the "media elite" which found religious attachments among journalists at major media to be "weak," he said: "That is true in my own case and is consistent with my impression of my colleagues. We were educated in secular institutions, are quite sensitive to changing fashions in secular intellectual thought and to the pseudo-secularism preached in many pulpits."

However, Harwood said, analysis cannot stop with the media—it must extend to the Church. As far as the Catholic Church is concerned, the "great intersection" of its doctrinal views and "the political affairs of this secular society" has for some time been a noteworthy phenomenon. The consequences of this "intrusion of religious bodies and individuals into secular affairs" have

been "demystification, a loss of deference, and an erosion of institutional standing."

Harwood next addressed the Lichter finding that in media coverage of controversies about Church teaching, sources which were critical of the teaching outnumbered sources which supported it. He remarked:

"One reason for the disparity of the numbers is...that the position of the Church on many of these issues is a minority position among Americans in general, and quite possibly among American Catholics as well. I think people who ignore the teachings on birth control probably far exceed those who observe them....

"The teachings on contraception, in my view, really have no intellectual standing in our society outside the Church, and perhaps with a minority within the Church. Possibly that could be said of other issues. But as journalists we are under no obligation to give superior weight or credence to an institutional declaration of the Pope or the cardinals or whatever."

Moving into his peroration, Harwood quoted a Time essay by Richard Brookhiser concerning internal controversies in American churches: "The obvious secular explanation for this hubbub is that America's churches are internalizing the mores of a developed society....[But] what we are witnessing is in fact a clash between two earnest and articulated theological impulses. Traditionalists and innovators disagree about sex because they disagree about the universe and about God."

Said Harwood, citing a study sponsored by Religious News Service:

"The story of religion in America is starting to resemble other stories, and can be covered by the conventions applied to other stories. It has come to resemble a great political story. It has begun to have high-profile scandals, and all the rest. It is becoming less of an institutional story which can be handled by covering established bodies and their actions. Religion, this study said, is be-

*continued on page 51*

# The Catholic Church, the Press and Me

BY JAMES CARROLL

One of the most important religious experiences I have had as a Roman Catholic was the result of the work of a reporter. I am thinking of a man who wrote under the name "Xavier Rynne," and of the series of dispatches he filed to *The New Yorker* between 1962 and 1965. They were titled simply, in the style of that magazine, "Letter From Vatican City." Their subject was The Vatican Council, then in session.

The Roman Catholic Church claims to be—and for its members is—different from every other human institution. When Jesus said, "For where two or three are gathered in my name, there am I in the midst of them," he planted the seed of an idea that grew into a theology that understands the Church itself as The Mystical Body of Christ. The Church itself, that is, is a living sacrament of God's loving presence in the world.

The trouble with this theology, of course, is that, whatever its mystical character, the Church is also a human institution, with the usual tendencies toward power-grabbing and self-deception. Often, over the centuries, Church leaders have hidden their failures, disguised their limits and expanded their worldly power by an inappropriate exploitation of the Church's spiritual meaning. In fact, Pope John XXIII convened the Vatican Council precisely to end a period of such abuse.

Xavier Rynne's reports from Rome were breathtaking for American Catholics and others exactly because they laid bare the human—read, political—character of the bishops' deliberations. The Vatican, like every power center, was rife with intrigue, wheeling and dealing, pork-barrelling, backbiting between factions and electioneering—but such activity had rarely ever been reported openly. The back rooms may have been filled with incense instead of smoke,

but the bishops and Cardinals, in trading votes and committee appointments, behaved like old-time pols.

Pious religious reporters and cowed secular ones were accustomed to covering such Church events as if they were the direct work of the Holy Spirit. To report not only the Church's shortcomings, but even its ordinariness, was seen as an act of disloyalty for the Catholic press, and an act of ancient anti-Catholicism for the secular press. Xavier Rynne understood as a reporter that the truth itself must be his only value; as a believer he understood—and helped me understand—that if God does live in the Church, it is precisely in its humanness. What else does the Christian belief mean that God became one of us? The theological revolution of the Vatican Council amounted to a return to the idea that, because of the Incarnation, the sinful character of the Church is not a secret to be covered up at all costs. That the Church is limited and all too human means that limited and all too human people like me can be at home in it. That truth, as reported by Xavier Rynne, didn't scandalize Catholics, but made us free.

Today, under Pope John Paul II, the leaders of the Roman Catholic Church are making a mighty effort to restore the pre-Council claims of infallibility and exemption. When *The Boston Globe*, in the spring of 1992, aggressively reported the accusations brought against a child-abusing priest, James Porter, Cardinal Bernard Law's fiercest denunciations were not of the child abuse or the long Church cover-up, but of the news media, particularly *The Globe*. Ironically, the news media, which are so often criticized for being anti-Church, in fact serve the conservative restoration's purpose by defining Church news as only that involving bishops and clergy. For example, the massive lay-led and largely feminist revolution in Catholicism, which involves

widespread rejection of "official" Church teaching mostly goes unreported. Though the Vatican Council redefined the word "Church" to mean the People of God, a concept far larger than the hierarchy, the secular news media continue to think of "Church" the way conservatives want them to.

To Catholics who want to return to the idea of a Church mystically exempt from the human condition, the reporting of the simple truth of Church affairs can be an affront. But to Catholics who glory in the humanness of the Church, understanding that its limits, and even sins, like their own, can be forgiven, truthful, even aggressive reporting of Church affairs, broadly defined, is not only welcome but also essential.

The secular press properly regards the Roman Catholic Church as an important news subject. With the demise of Communism, and the growth of sectarian fundamentalism, this institutionalized world-ideology with a membership that breaks all bounds of class, ethnicity and nationality, is more important than ever. Its beliefs and disciplines can both impede the building of a humane earth, and be central to it. The on-going reform of the Church will always be a story of special interest to Catholics, but more and more people are discovering their stake in this great struggle for the soul of Catholicism.

Xavier Rynne, who was a Redemptorist priest named F.X. Murphy, knew this story's value. He gave us all the model we still seek, trusting the truth no matter whom it offends, and reporting the human stories of this great religion with the equanimity that comes of letting God be the judge. ■

*James Carroll is a novelist, the author most recently of "Memorial Bridge." His novel "Brothers" will be published next winter. His weekly column appears in The Boston Globe.*

# Southern Baptists

*'Fundamentalists,' 'Bible-Believers,' 'Conservatives,' 'Moderates'—  
Reporter's Challenge Is to Explain Their Meaning*

BY GUSTAV NIEBUHR

One late July afternoon five years ago, I had completed an interview with the new president of the Southern Baptist Convention. The month before, this man, pastor of an immense congregation, had narrowly won the top office at his denomination's annual convention, that year held in San Antonio. It was the 10th straight victory for his faction, in a contest marked by bitter rhetoric on both sides. At one point, hundreds in the losing party (reacting to a related matter) angrily marched down to the Alamo for a brief but impassioned demonstration.

Our interview, held in an Atlanta hotel suite, focused mainly on the recent firing of a young Baptist missionary, a man serving as a seminary instructor in Latin America who was charged with voicing doubts that Christ had been resurrected in a physical body.



Still, the most interesting moment came at the very end. Just as we were about to part, he stopped me with a plea: "Please don't call me a fundamentalist in your article." It was clear from his tone that this was more than a casual request, so I asked him what he would prefer to be called. "Just call me a Bible-believing Christian," he replied.

To any casual eavesdropper, this exchange would likely have seemed utterly obscure. Fundamentalist? Bible-believer? These terms are little understood, if at all, in secular society.

But within the world of the Southern Baptist Convention, they are weighted with deep political meaning and are redolent of a vast religious conflict in which thousands of people have invested years of their lives.

The challenge for a reporter is knowing how to explain such terms to a non-Baptist audience—and in so doing, provide insight into one of the great religion news stories of this century, the internal strife that has riven a vast religious organization.

A second journalistic challenge is to put the events in both their historic and current political contexts. Biblical "inerrantists"—persons who believe

Scripture to be correct in matters of history and science as well as faith—had lost bitter fights against "modernists" within Protestant denominations two generations earlier. Ridiculed by both religious and secular liberals for their stance against evolution during the famous Scopes trial in 1925, these early fundamentalists retreated from public view for many years.

Now, following the social upheavals that began in the tumultuous 1960's, their modern heirs were back on the offensive, well-organized and winning, first in the smaller, more centralized Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod, and then in the Southern Baptist Convention.

This wave of denominational activism coincided with the emergence of conservative Christians as a formidable force in secular politics: In 1979, the year that fundamentalists began their campaign to drive liberalism from the Southern Baptist Convention, the Rev. Jerry Falwell organized Moral Majority to push for conservative change in government. Not coincidentally, the two saw a common threat in liberalism, shared a staunch opposition to abortion and homosexuality and feared that society was slipping out of control. (Although an independent Baptist, Falwell has kept in touch with his Southern Baptist counterparts and often spoken appreciatively of their efforts and success.)

Among the Southern Baptists, all the superficial elements that lend themselves to compelling stories have always been present: vast crowds (at the annual conventions), plenty of fighting words and, as noted, the occasional demonstration.

*Gustav Niebuhr is a reporter on the national desk of The Washington Post, covering religion. Previously he worked as a reporter for The Wall Street Journal and The Atlanta Journal-Constitution. Niebuhr is a graduate of Pomona College, Claremont, CA., and Oxford University in England, where he studied modern history. In 1989 and 1992, he won the Supple Memorial Award of the Religion Newswriters Association for excellence in writing about religion in the news.*

But the story of the changes within the denomination is complicated, because it takes place within a particular cultural framework—arising from the rural, white South—that is foreign to the readers of secular newspapers at the end of the 20th Century. Moreover, it's a story that takes patience to tell, because it is being played out over many years, and in locations as scattered as Civil War battlefields, from the Virginia tidewater to the plains of north Texas—in other words, wherever there are Southern Baptist seminaries, missionary agencies and other institutions.

Methodists may debate whether to exclude "militaristic" hymns from their services; Episcopalians may wrestle with the issue of ordaining homosexuals. For the reporter, such controversies can be narrowly defined and, helpfully for readers, compared with issues that secular institutions are wrestling with.

But the strife within the Southern Baptist Convention, by marked contrast, divides people who uniformly call themselves conservative and who cast their concerns in the "language of Zion," a Scripture-laced discourse hallowed by generations of use in the rural South. (Thus, the passionate speeches delivered outside the Alamo turned on the question of how to define the "priesthood of the believer"—i.e., how much authority should a pastor have over the way his church members interpret the Bible and, by extension, vote and otherwise live their lives.)

Who are they? Counting more than 15 million members, Southern Baptists make up the largest Protestant denomination in the country, and unlike a number of others, are actually growing. In history and political organization, they are markedly different from their closest competitors in the U.S. religious marketplace, the Roman Catholic Church (which counts well over 50 million members) and the United Methodist Church (just under 9 million).

Southern Baptists field several thousand missionaries at home and abroad, maintain six seminaries, publish mountains of religious literature each year and run an in-house news service and upwards of 20 weekly newspapers across the country.

The Southern Baptist Convention came into existence in 1845, in a split from their Northern counterparts by Southern churchmen furious over the refusal of a national Baptist agency to appoint a slave holder as a missionary—an act of secession that foreshadowed the Civil War 15 years later.

For journalists who think of covering religious groups in reference to their central authority (as in the case of the Catholic Church), the Southern Baptist Convention can be confusing. It has no central headquarters per se, although some of its most important institutions are clustered in downtown Nashville. Its president, elected annually, has no authority to speak for anyone in the denomination but himself. (An example of the priesthood of the believer.) Each of the 37,000 Southern Baptist churches is autonomous, hiring and firing its clergy as its congregation desires.

What do they believe? Historically, Southern Baptists have put a high premium on personal behavior, inveighing against the use of alcohol, tobacco, playing cards and "mixed" bathing (men and women swimming together). But far more importantly, a vast majority speak of the central experience of being spiritually born again to a "personal relationship" with Jesus Christ.

Fueled by a desire to bring others to that experience, Southern Baptists have regarded themselves as a special tool of God to spread the divine Word. In his book on the current crisis, Bill J. Leonard, himself a Southern Baptist and a professor at Samford University's Beeson Divinity School, quotes from a 1948 speech given by an Alabama pastor that the denomination represented "the last hope, the fairest hope, the only hope for evangelizing this world."

In the late 1970's, denominational leaders launched a program called "Bold Mission Thrust," to preach or distribute a gospel message to every single inhabitant of the planet by the year 2000.

Still, it's not their spiritual ambitions that have drawn attention to Southern Baptists lately, but rather that they are increasingly seen as a political prize.

Although they have churches now in every state, Southern Baptists remain strongest in the Southeast, making up a

significant plurality of the population in many states—real political clout in a quadrennial partisan battleground.

Two of the last four presidents, Jimmy Carter and Bill Clinton, have come from the denomination's ranks. The other two, Ronald Reagan and George Bush, worked hard to win Southern Baptist votes. The Republicans' tools were issues perceived to appeal to conservative whites—a strong military, support for school prayer and opposition to abortion and big government. Based on post-election surveys, James L. Guth, Furman University political science professor, found Reagan and Bush had each captured around 80 percent of the Southern Baptist clergy in 1984 and 1988, respectively.

Clinton cut into that margin, boosting the Democratic ticket's margin in key Southern states, with a much more subtle appeal, one that might easily have been missed by journalists not familiar with Southern Baptists and their culture. A young Nashville lawyer, a Republican who had twice voted for Reagan and once for Bush, told me last October that he was supporting Clinton this time around. It had nothing to do with the economy. "My decision is first of all based on language," he said. Both Clinton and his Southern Baptist running mate, Al Gore, used words like "redemption," "justice," "faith" and "renewal," all of which resonated deeply in the ears of religious Southerners. In other words, they spoke the language of Zion—and it helped win the election.

Which brings me back to the convention president I interviewed in Atlanta five years ago.

He wanted to be known as a Bible-believer, a faithful defender of Scripture against the insidious threat of theological liberalism, which his faction said had infiltrated the Southern Baptist seminaries and national agencies, and threatened to spread doubts about God's immortal truths among the rank and file.

In this view, the strife in the Southern Baptist Convention was a battle for the Bible, God's inerrant Word, starting with the belief that Adam and Eve were real people—not some neat allegory

*continued on page 53*

# Judaism

## *'Superficial and Squeamish' Are the Major Complaints About Stories of Jewish Cultural and Religious Issues*

BY JEFFREY GOLDBERG

Jim Sleeper, The New York Daily News columnist, tells a story about the time a reporter returned to his newsroom from a meeting of a black journalists' association. A Jewish reporter, hearing his colleague talk about the meeting, jokingly asked him why Jewish journalists didn't have the same sort of association. "They do," the black reporter replied. "It meets every day on West 43d Street." The response was made in good humor, Sleeper said, but it underscores the existence of a particular perception about the Jews and the press, namely, that the Jews own the presses, and not only the ones off Times Square.

There certainly is a disproportionate Jewish presence in the newsrooms of major media organizations; anyone who knows what the suffixes "berg" and "stein" generally indicate would agree. But there is, of course, no Jewish conspiracy to control the press, and when I am asked how I know there isn't (as I was not long ago by an official of the LaRouche organization), I offered two forms of proof:

- 1) No one has ever asked me to join such a conspiracy, even though my credentials for membership are impeccable.
- 2) If "The Jews" really did control the media, coverage of the Jewish community and the issues that interest it would be far superior to what we see today.

Please don't worry. This is not going to be a diatribe about the American press's bias against Israel, though this is a common, and, occasionally reasonable, complaint made by many Jews. A

complaint that is heard less frequently but seems to me to be more legitimate is that coverage of Jewish cultural and religious issues in mainstream American publications is too often superficial and squeamish.

But first, Israel, since it is a subject that preoccupies both the press and its critics in the Jewish community. That there is intense dislike of the press in certain Jewish precincts is no secret—there is a whole movement in Jewish political life devoted to "exposing" the faults of American press coverage of the Middle East. The movement has its own



*Jeffrey Goldberg is the New York bureau chief of The Forward, a national Jewish weekly newspaper. The Forward is the three-year-old, English-language sister publication of Forverts, the 96-year-old Yiddish newspaper, which has counted among its writers Elie Wiesel and Isaac Bashevis Singer. Before joining The Forward, Goldberg was a columnist and reporter for The Jerusalem Post, and before that he covered the police beat for The Washington Post. He is a veteran of the Israel Defense Forces and a former kibbutznik.*

organizations, including the adorably named Camera (the Committee for Accuracy in Middle East Reporting in America) and Flame (Facts and Logic About the East). The movement even has its own guru, David Bar-Ilan, the former concert pianist and current editor of The Jerusalem Post, whose weekly "Eye on the Media" column is devoted primarily to attacking Jerusalem-based correspondents for American media outlets. (In the interest of full disclosure, let me note that I worked for the Post at a time when Bar-Allan served as editorial page editor. I like Bar-Allan very much, and greatly admire his piano playing.)

The complaints of these groups, and of Bar-Ilan, are simple—there are too many stories about Israel in the American press and the stories are too negative and regularly inaccurate.

About inaccuracy, they do have a point, to a point. There are always factual inaccuracies and inappropriate shadings to be found in daily journalism, especially if you spend your days relentlessly combing the press for its weaknesses.

But too often the combers go overboard in search of slights.

Take, for instance, Camera's recent circular on The New York Times's current Israel correspondent, entitled, "Through a Glass Peevishly: Clyde Haberman Covers Israel."

The circular's author, Andrea Levin, the president of Camera, excoriates Haberman for his "preoccupation with alleged Israeli shortcomings and his testiness with that nation's expressions of vulnerability in the face of escalating terror attacks." Here is one of Levin's principal complaints about Haberman:



"Haberman grows noticeably impatient when Jews complain of being murdered. Even when they die in near-record numbers at the hands of Arab knifemurders...the correspondent is quick to remind readers not to exaggerate the problem."

Levin cites as proof a March 9 dispatch from Haberman in which he wrote that "Obscured in the Israeli disquiet is the fact that Palestinians, including children, are dying in much higher numbers, although usually during clashes with soldiers and not in what most Israelis would consider unprovoked attacks..."

Call me an anti-Semite, but that seems to be a reasonable and balanced statement of fact about something that has been, well, obscured, in the recent wave of attacks on Israelis.

There are, of course, examples of Middle East reporting that go overboard. One example that still sticks out as a bit of a reach was a Newsweek story that attempted to link an alleged rise in the number of wife beatings in Israel to the warrior spirit of Israeli men.

But Levin, Bar-Illan and company go beyond pointing out the perceived weaknesses in individual stories. There is in their circle something of a Jewish counter-conspiracy which holds that the press is, in an organized fashion, out to get Israel. The counter-conspiracists hold that the press runs, relative to Israel's actual size and importance, too many stories about the country, and then spins these stories in the most negative way possible. The eventual goal of the press, the counter-conspiracists believe, is to see Israel withdraw from the occupied territories and to force the American government to reduce or eliminate its aid package to Israel.

This conspiracy theory stems from three basic misunderstandings. The first is the old stand-by, the belief that the press is organized enough to conspire about anything. I have met people in Israel and in America who study with Talmudic scrutiny photo placement and camera angles, all with the goal of proving I don't know what—maybe that photojournalists are on the PLO payroll. The second misunderstanding is that the press is somehow obligated to

accentuate the positive, or that it accentuates the positive only when it comes to reporting on the policies of Arab governments or of the PLO. There have been cases in the Arab world when reporters have been cowed into self-censorship, by the PLO in Beirut, for instance, but the stories now coming out of Kuwait or Egypt are certainly as hard-hitting (and negative) as anything that has been written about Israel. (Egypt's supporters have taken notice of the negative stories. In a recent letter to The New York Times, one partisan of Egypt's government wrote that "It is true there are problems here, but the international media have blown things out of proportion... Next time, please also show that despite infrequent interruptions, life here is peaceful.") The third misunderstanding is rooted in the belief that the American press is, in essence, too nosy, probing and poking Israeli society and policy when it could be focusing its efforts on domestic problems or the failings of other countries.

The answer to this one is simple—any country that receives \$3 billion in direct aid from the American government annually should be monitored by the unofficial watchdogs of the American government. There are some who argue that the press holds Israel to a higher standard than its neighbors, but any recipient of so much American aid (and this includes Egypt) should be monitored rigorously, and, besides, a higher standard compared to what? Iraq? Syria? Thank God that more is expected from Israel than from its terrorist neighbors.

In traditional Jewish fashion, I will now argue the other side. While there is no plot to get Israel, the knees of some reporters I've met while covering the West Bank do jerk to the side of the perceived underdog, and these reporters tend to cast the Arab-Israeli conflict as solely a Palestinian-Israeli dispute. There is also an unacknowledged assumption in many stories that Middle East history begins in 1948 or in 1967. While the constraints of daily journalism prohibit the inclusion of lengthy background on the provocations Israel endured in the days leading up to the Six-Day-War, the reader is nevertheless

not fully informed when he reads only something like this: "In a lightning attack, Israel seized and occupied the territories that are now, 26 years later, still in dispute."

If superficiality crops up every so often in reporting out of Israel, it is a hallmark of coverage of Jewish religious and cultural issues.

A rabbi I know clips article for what he calls his "Yom Kippur anthology." This a collection of stories newspapers run each year about the Jewish Days of Awe.

Holiday time is too often the only occasion when newspapers (the largest dailies excepted) try to explain the spiritual and communal issues that touch the lives of American Jews more deeply than, say, the controversy over West Bank settlements. But the stories I have read seldom seem to be the product of more than a half-day's reporting. And all too frequently, instead of using the holiday as a peg for a discussion about the intermarriage crisis or the cultural implications of assimilation, or an investigation into the fissures dividing Jewish religious movements, or a look at the theological implications of interreligious dialogue, the stories stick to the following formula: a) tell the reader it's Yom Kippur; b) the synagogues certainly are full tonight, aren't they? c) quote some rabbis; d) isn't it tough to fast for 25 hours? Sure is, say local Jews.

"...Despite the diversity of the religion, most Jews—whether Orthodox, Conservative or Reform—spend the holiday fasting and praying in synagogues, local rabbis said," reads one such story that was published last year in a California daily. "Among many, thoughts will be focused on Israel, where a recent change in leadership has generated optimism that the country will be able to negotiate a peace pact with its Arab neighbors."

There's nothing particularly harmful in the preceding paragraph, but it doesn't really say anything either. Jewish readers learn nothing new about themselves from these boilerplate sto-

*continued on page 53*

# The President's Religion

## *Catholic and Southern Baptist Influences on Politics And Policies of Clinton Are Analyzed*

BY SHAUN CASEY

By his own account Bill Clinton is a deeply religious man, yet barring a few notable exceptions, journalists have not analyzed what difference this fact might make on how he governs. What makes this analysis particularly difficult is his own affirmation that he is influenced by two very different and historically adversarial branches of Christendom: the Roman Catholic and Southern Baptist churches. Religion may simply be a private compartment in the President's life, as it is for many Americans, with no public consequences. There are, however, reasons for thinking otherwise.

It is worth noting three views in the press about presidential piety in general and Clinton in particular. The extreme view sees religion as an aberration. The example that comes to mind is Gail Sheehy's analysis of Gary Hart, which sought to find the genesis for his manifold failings of character in his unfortunate childhood in the conservative Church of the Nazarene. This view tends to see religion as negative in general and conservative religion as pathological in particular, peculiarly so with respect to sexuality. Given Clinton's troubles early on in the campaign with Gennifer Flowers it is interesting that few if any people took up this line of analysis.

The second view is the therapeutic. Perhaps the clearest example is offered by Lance Morrow in his Man of the Year essay for Time magazine (January 3, 1993). Here the broader rubric of the therapeutic recovery movement subsumes religious talk and experience. In

that essay Morrow wrote about Clinton's campaign strategy as if it were an extended therapy session in which the personally recovering politician holds out recovery and healing for the nation. Themes of courage and change are seen as deriving from the famous serenity prayer of Alcoholics Anonymous: ("God, grant me the serenity to accept the things I cannot change, the courage to change the things I can, and the wisdom to know the difference.") Morrow highlighted the confessional nature of the Democratic Convention as bringing together the cardinal virtues of the recovery movement: recovery, repentance and confession. Yet to one familiar with the rhythms and cadences of conservative Protestantism and its preaching, at least the last two of these virtues have a history that far outdistances the triumph of the therapeutic in American society. Indeed, the rhetorical style of the convention owed more to the confessional theology of the Southern Baptist revival and youth rally than to the anonymity of a 12-step recovery meeting.

None of this is to deny the presence of therapeutic language in the campaign. The point is that repentance, confession and calls for change can also be found in Christianity in general and the Baptist tradition in particular. Indeed the serenity prayer that Morrow cites was written by the theologian Reinhold Niebuhr and later appropriated by Alcoholics Anonymous. The therapeutic view, then, while insightful is incomplete because it misses the theological dimension. Perhaps the therapeutic model is the best a purely secular accounting of Clinton can muster.

The third view is bemused objectivity. There is a small but significant amount of reporting that attempts a relatively straightforward accounting of the details of Clinton's religious history. The primary examples of this view can be seen in the June 29, 1992 Washington Post article by David Maraniss, "Roots of Clinton's Faith Deep, Varied," and in Priscilla Painton's article, "Clinton's Spiritual Journey," in Time (April 5, 1993). While this reporting often does a fine job of presenting data it is rarely connected to any coherent conception of what impact this phenomena might have on his presidency. There is a clear acknowledgment that religion has been influential in Clinton's life but it rarely ventures beyond the simple facts. The missing interpretive ingredient is any deep appreciation for the two traditions, Baptist and Catholic, and how they might combine to shape the world view of a public figure and hence how that leader governs. Much of the analysis in this article draws on the information reported in various media sources during the campaign. What this analysis hopes to do is reduce the confusion by establishing a framework for interpreting the information.

The process that will help bring clarity is a version of what Richard Neustadt and Ernest May call "placing" individu-

*Shaun Casey is completing a Th.D. in religion and society at Harvard Divinity School. He received the M. Div. from the Divinity School in 1983, and the M.P.A. from Harvard's Kennedy School of Government. He has been a minister for Churches of Christ in Mississippi and Massachusetts.*

als. In their book "Thinking in Time: The Uses of History for Decision Makers," they describe placement as using historical information to enrich initial stereotypes about another person's outlook. Their rather common-sense procedure calls for placing the person under scrutiny against public, historical events, and against what they call the relatively small details of personal history. It is their contention that such placement sharpens understandings of what people might do and guards against projecting one's own meanings onto another person.

This essay will pursue only one aspect of this process, that is, to identify those aspects of Clinton's religious experience that will help make his religious commitment clearer to those people whose business it is to report and interpret his performance in office. These commitments can illuminate his outlook on the world.

Religions are best understood as comprehensive schemes of interpretation that seek to interpret the whole of reality in light of the core convictions, rituals and sacred texts that comprise the identity of communities of faith. This view is known as a cultural/linguistic understanding of religion in the technical jargon of theology. To begin to understand the significance of membership in a particular religious community requires paying attention to a flood of details about the logic and grammar of belief in that particular community. Unfortunately while religions may be anthropological feasts, journalists rarely seem to have the time, the training or the inclination to sup at length. The upshot is that religion may present as strong a barrier to understanding a person's actions and thoughts as do race, gender and class as Neustadt and May so effectively demonstrate.

The first component of the Catholic influence on Clinton was his experience as an undergraduate at Georgetown. According to Maraniss in *The Post*, this was a period in which Clinton was deeply influenced by two of his professors, the Rev. Otto Hentz, a philosophy teacher and the other, the Rev. Joseph Sebes, a religion teacher. Hentz even spoke to Clinton in terms of

the Arkansas student's becoming a Jesuit based upon Clinton's performance in class. While Clinton did not convert to Catholicism it seems safe to conclude that he developed a deep appreciation for at least certain strains of Catholic social teaching, which he continued to cultivate throughout his adult life. This connection becomes clearer in the speech Clinton gave at the University of Notre Dame in September, 1992.

This speech was Clinton's attempt to outline the values embedded in his candidacy and also an attempt to describe the role his faith played in his conception of government. While the speech has all of the rhetorical disadvantages of a stump performance, with no sustained argument and a sound-bite style, nevertheless one can clearly see the Catholic influence. Several passages are worth noting.

Clinton affirmed that despite his Baptist upbringing he found much in common with the Catholic environment he encountered at Georgetown. "I was then and remain today deeply drawn to the Catholic social mission, to the idea that as President Kennedy said, 'here on earth God's work must truly be our own.' I loved the Catholic understanding of history and tradition and how they shape us."

Another binding aspect between the two traditions in his experience was the working class sensibilities of both traditions. "Both Baptists and Catholics are rooted in the spiritual riches of working people, people who know the pain of poverty and the bite of discrimination, people for whom life is a daily struggle in which they must sweat and sacrifice for themselves and their families, for whom life is made worthwhile not only through hard work and self-reliance but through opening their hearts to God and their hands to their neighbors."

The rest of the speech consisted primarily of Clinton's explication of a series of central tenets of Catholic social teaching, such as community, the need to balance rights and responsibilities, opportunities and obligations, and working for the common good. Clinton argued that it is both a moral imperative and a practical necessity that we create

a new sense of community in America. What is needed is a rethinking of the notion of social contract in terms of restoring the link between rights and responsibilities, opportunities and obligations. He urged Americans to overcome the false choice between individual responsibility and social responsibility because the country needs both now more than ever.

For Clinton this type of moral analysis has implications for the work of government. Here he quoted approvingly the National Conference of Catholic Bishops pastoral letter "Putting Children and Families First." "No government can love a child, no policy can substitute for a family's care. But government can either support or undermine families. There has been an unfortunate, unnecessary, and unreal polarization in discussions in how best to help families. The undeniable fact is that our children's future is shaped both by the values of their parents and the policies of our nation."

Clinton made two more explicit references to Catholic social teaching in the remainder of the speech. At one point he stated, "I also share the values expressed in the Bishops' pastoral letter on the economy: that every institution and every economic decision in our society must be judged by whether it protects or undermines the dignity of the human person. And, for everyone who can work, human dignity is first and foremost the opportunity and the obligation to support oneself and contribute to society." Near the end of the speech he stated, "I want all Americans to learn, in their own way, the lesson that I know you've learned from Catholic social teaching. Yes, our individual rights flow from our essential dignity as a creation of God. But each of us reaches our fullness as a human being by being of service to our fellow men and women."

Clinton concluded the speech with a reference to a quiet crisis in our country. "...it is a crisis of spirituality and community—a crisis that calls upon each of us to remember, and to act upon, our obligations to each other. The purpose of our community, the purpose of our government, and the purpose of our

leaders should be to call us to pursue our common values and our common good, not just in a moment of extreme crisis, but every day of our lives, starting right now, today."

As a Catholic moral theologian, Charles Curran, has documented, contemporary Catholic social teaching emphasizes the social and communitarian dimensions of human existence in the political sphere and is opposed to the individualism that is common in American society. Curran demonstrates how Catholic social teaching has overcome its earlier rejection of rights talk associated with liberalism yet it has tended to reconstruct those rights in ways that reduce the individualism inherent in such talk. While some recent official Catholic social teaching has moved away from the concept of the common good, Curran argues that the basic notion of the common-good tradition in Catholic thought is still present. The purpose here is not to provide a full-blown description of Catholic social thought, rather it is to show that the themes Clinton identified are in fact central features in the tradition. Clinton's evocation of rights and responsibilities, the notion of the common good and the positive moral role of government resonates with the Catholic tradition.

The only extended treatment of this speech found in the print media was an article by Fred Barnes, "The New Covenant: Clinton's Religious Strategy" in the November 9, 1992 issue of *The New Republic*. While Barnes stresses the political wisdom of Clinton's speech and details the high level of preparation that went into crafting it, he doesn't push the question of how Clinton's religious commitments will make a difference in a Clinton presidency. Barnes observes that the speech did not generate much national press attention and indeed *The New Republic* only ran Barnes's analysis two months after the speech when the election was over. Barnes did see the length to which Clinton went to identify himself with the Catholic social tradition.

There are at least three conclusions to be drawn from this analysis of the Catholic influence. First, it is extraordi-

nary to hear a President name such explicit theological influences on his political thinking. Clinton's references to the pastoral letters written by the Bishops is also a signal that he is open to explicitly theological arguments when it comes to policy formation. The pastoral letter on the economy, "Economic Justice for All," moves from the theological analysis to a detailed list of policy positions that try to embody its theological rationale. Unlike John Kennedy, the only Catholic president, Clinton seems open to entertaining theological voices and arguments in shaping his policy.

Second, Clinton's tendency to seek middle routes between opposing political positions, or, as some characterize it, his tendency to embrace all positions, may be due more to the influence of the Catholic social tradition and less to some ill-defined character flaw. As noted above, Charles Curran has documented how contemporary Catholic social thought has tried to navigate a route between its older communitarian interests in the common good on the one hand and its disdain for liberal rights talk and individualism on the other. What emerges is a hybrid view which wants to bring talk of the common good and community to bear upon rights concepts so that human dignity is preserved and yet obligations to society are also stressed. This bears a striking resemblance to what Clinton often states he means by being a new kind of Democrat.

Third, one has to wonder if Clinton will actively consult Catholic moral theologians in the process of formulating policy. For instance, would he consult the principal theological consultants to the various pastoral letters he cited in the Notre Dame speech as he crafts his domestic legislation? Has he consulted with Catholic moral theologians as he has pondered the various opportunities to use force in intervening in places like Bosnia and Haiti? This consultation is of course clouded by some of Clinton's other commitments. While the Bishops probably support much of Clinton's health-care reform, the issues of abortion services, euthanasia and physician-assisted suicide may prove to be too thorny to win the Bishops' approval of

the entire package. The problem, then, is how Clinton draws on this moral tradition that he says has influenced him very deeply while maintaining some commitments that will make it difficult for the leadership of the Catholic Church to publicly acknowledge a strong link to Clinton.

The Baptist influence on Clinton is quite different. To call oneself a Baptist does not immediately clarify where one stands either theologically or politically. Jesse Jackson and Jesse Helms are Baptist as are Jerry Falwell and Harvey Cox. President Clinton has to be placed a little more precisely against the diverse panoply.

Samuel S. Hill, Jr., Professor of Religion at the University of Florida, wrote a classic article, "The Shape and Shapes of Popular Southern Piety" which should be required reading for anyone needing an introduction to southern evangelical religion. (See *Varieties of Southern Evangelicalism* edited by David Edwin Harrell, Jr. Macon: Mercer University Press, 1981.)

The four particular versions of Evangelical Protestantism Hill sees are: 1) truth-oriented, "fundamentalist"; 2) conversion-oriented, "evangelistic"; 3) spiritually oriented, "devotional"; 4) service-oriented, "ethical." It should be noted that a single denomination may exhibit more than one kind and likewise an individual may embody two or three. There is evidence in Clinton's experience of the conversion-oriented and the spiritually oriented and possibly the influence of the service-oriented.

Hill describes the truth-oriented type as seeing the essence of Christianity as a series of divinely revealed propositions, facts and laws all of which are to be found in the Bible. While many people tend to view all Southern Baptists as fundamentalist, this labeling is to badly misunderstand the tragedy that has befallen the largest Protestant denomination in our country. Indeed, fundamentalists have taken control of the denominational bureaucracy but the majority of rank-and-file members do not identify themselves with the fundamentalist faction of the denomination. Dr. Rex Horne, the pastor of Immanuel Baptist Church in Little Rock, Arkansas,

where Clinton was a member for over 10 years has explicitly distanced himself from the denominational feuds between the fundamentalist and moderate factions. Clinton himself told Bill Moyers in a televised interview just before the Democratic Convention last summer that his sympathies were with the moderates and not the fundamentalists.

On the other hand Hill identifies the Southern Baptists as the best example of the conversion-oriented variety. According to Hill the animating force here is evangelism, the task of saving souls. The seeking and finding of personal salvation is the essence of Christianity. Clinton's pastor, Dr. Horne, confirms this in two sermons preached in November, 1992. In the first of these two sermons, "Election Reflections" preached on November 8, Horne recounts the appalling efforts of fundamentalist Baptists to interfere with the worship services at Immanuel Baptist because of the church's tolerance of Clinton's views on abortion and homosexuality. Horne's response to these critics is in effect that he wants nothing to do with their sectarian politics, rather he wants simply to preach the gospel to the unchurched in Little Rock. Evangelism is his priority. A couple of weeks later Horne paints an interesting portrait of this type of evangelicalism in a sermon entitled, "What is a Southern Baptist?" What emerges is a portrait of the Christian faith that, while taking the traditional evangelical task of seeking and saving the lost very seriously, displays a greater comfort with the upper middle class ethos of many of its members and more than a little pride in the fact that its most famous member had been elected President. Life in this congregation would appear to be typical of many middle-of-the-road Southern Baptist churches.

But Clinton's religious experience doesn't stop with his involvement with Immanuel Baptist and Hill's varieties of piety continue to provide clarity. The third kind, the spiritually oriented, includes various denominations, including the mainline Black churches as well as the charismatic and pentecostal traditions. In these latter two groups one finds the more intense expressions of

this faith. God is seen as present and active, leaping the gap between the natural and supernatural to generate a variety of phenomena from healing of body or mind to enabling the spirit-possessed person to speak in tongues.

It is particularly interesting to note Clinton's affinity for this small corner in Christendom. Maraniss in his Washington Post article reports that Clinton has maintained close ties with a group of Pentecostal ministers since his first term as governor. Throughout the Eighties Clinton attended an annual summer Pentecostal revival in Redfield, Arkansas. Clinton was apparently drawn not only to the music but also to the genuine piety he saw in the lives of the participants. This little known aspect of Clinton's experience needs further research and analysis, but if nothing else it goes further to show the astonishing range of his religious experience.

Hill's final category, service-oriented, is the least populated of all four types and is the most progressive, especially with regard to race. The two examples Hill cites, Clarence Jordan and Will Campbell, are both Southern Baptists. Jordan founded the racially integrated Koenonia Farm in Americus, Georgia, and Campbell was chaplain at Old Miss during its intergration in the Sixties. Both of these men serve as patron saints to progressive Baptists. While no direct evidence has emerged that Clinton has pointed to this small sample of progressive Baptists as role models, it would be interesting to put that question to the President, as many of his progressive impulses would track with this type of religious example.

What about more specific features of Clinton's experience? Various accounts have been given of the closeness of his relationship with the Rev. W. O. Vaught, who served as his pastor from the late Seventies until Vaught's death in 1989. What is extraordinary is how Vaught's counsel helped Clinton sort through the thorny moral dimensions of two controversial issues—abortion and capital punishment.

Clinton related to Maraniss how Vaught showed him that the Ten Commandments outlaw murder but not capital punishment. Commentators have

suggested that Clinton's use of the death penalty amounted to a cynical political choice, which showed he could stand up to conservative Republicans. Yet Maraniss depicts Clinton as one wrestling with whether the death penalty violated his faith and Vaught as one providing the theological basis for resolving the dilemma.

This particular interpretation is not surprising to anyone familiar with conservative Protestantism. Vaught's counsel to Clinton about abortion represents a radically different picture. Here Vaught told Clinton that in the Hebrew Bible life began at birth in the sense that to be alive meant literally to have breath. Vaught did not conclude that abortion was right but that it was wrong to consider abortion murder from a biblical perspective. Clinton apparently felt greatly aided by a biblical interpretation that provided some justification for a position other than banning abortions. While Vaught's interpretation of the Hebrew Bible may be accurate from a historical perspective, it is quite rare to find a Southern Baptist pastor embracing such a position.

If there is a conclusion to be drawn from this relationship it is one that puts a finer point on the influence of Catholicism on Clinton. That is, not only does Clinton seem to be open to explicitly theological arguments regarding public policy, he also seems to be open to biblical arguments about policy positions. Just how biblical warrants function for the President is not clear.

The final piece in this portrait of Clinton's religion is drawn from Bill Moyers's remarks at the First Baptist Church in Washington at a private church service attended by the Clintons and the Gores, called the Inaugural Prayer Meeting, on the eve of the inauguration. What Moyers set out to do that evening was to call on the two Southern Baptists, President-elect Clinton and Vice President-elect Gore, to remember their Baptist roots. What Moyers did in his brief remarks was to sketch a manifesto of Baptist political theology. As such his remarks comprise a fitting conclusion to my analysis.

*continued on page 54*

# The Black Churches

*Neither the Media Nor the Ministers Have Taken Advantage of the Opportunities for Articles*

BY ADELLE M. BANKS

I was on the elevator of the convention center when my press badge became the topic of polite conversation.

"Who do you work for?" asked the man.

"The Orlando Sentinel," I replied.

"Is that the black-owned paper or the white-owned paper?"

I told him it was the white-owned paper and volunteered the name of the black-owned paper. The elevator door opened and he walked away, seemingly disappointed with my response.

That brief exchange occurred while I was covering the African Methodist Episcopal (AME) Church's General Conference last summer in Orlando. As the religion reporter for The Orlando Sentinel, I am used to covering a variety of religious adherents, including blacks, whites, Christians, Jews and Muslims. But as a black religion reporter covering the mostly black church's quadrennial convention, I found that despite the color of my skin, some people did not trust me because of the color of the people who paid me to be there.

It was, in some ways, an indictment of white-owned news media, who often are accused of paying attention to blacks only when there is a murder in a mostly black neighborhood, a pending Black History Month event, or an upcoming anniversary of the death of the Rev. Martin Luther King, Jr.

I also sensed a lack of trust in the voice of the woman who called me earlier this year and suggested we cover members of her black congregation marching into their new building one Sunday morning. I explained that, with the growth of Orlando, we were unable to cover every church transition. Her response was that we seem to be able to

cover all the crime stories in the neighborhood and should cover something "positive" for a change.

When I covered a meeting called by a local minister after the Los Angeles riots, I approached one woman, told her I worked for The Sentinel, and asked for a comment. She stepped back and laughed loudly in my face. The man with whom she was speaking made the old wisecrack about the "Slantinel."

My presence at the meeting, a clear demonstration of the paper's commitment to covering the issue, was viewed instead as a reminder of all the times the paper had not seen fit to cover a story of particular concern to African-Americans.

Whether dealing with national conventions or local congregations, newspaper reporters need to learn to be more sensitive to the goings-on in the black church. Long hailed as the "backbone of the black community," it continues to be an institution of faith and often a force for social change. As such, it is a viable source for stories that should not be ignored.

If a reader has a problem with a story that has been published, perhaps because it failed to include a black perspective, the best response is an attempt to improve coverage. When people have complained, I have tried to bear their concerns in mind as I approach other stories.

Two years ago, after the Sentinel published my story on an annual event where public school students pray around a flagpole, I received a call from a woman complaining that we chose to highlight a predominantly white school. Black children prayed around flagpoles, too, she said. The next year I covered the event at a school with a larger black population.



*Adelle M. Banks has been the religion reporter for The Orlando Sentinel since she joined the paper in November 1988. She previously worked at The Providence Journal and Evening Bulletin; The Syracuse Herald-Journal and Herald American, and the Press & Sun Bulletin in Binghamton, N.Y. A native of Newport, R.I., Banks is a 1984 graduate of Mount Holyoke College. She is a member of the Central Florida Association of Black Journalists and Broadcasters, the National Association of Black Journalists, and the Religion Newswriters Association.*

When I covered the nine-day AME convention, officials seemed prepared for news media coverage only during the opening banquet when then-presidential candidate Bill Clinton addressed convention-goers.

But when dozens of reporters on hand for that one event disappeared and I didn't, I think AME officials weren't

quite sure what to do with me. Instead of taking advantage of a chance for additional publicity, some church officials were unwilling to give me church documents and information that would have helped me in my coverage of the convention. I suspect they were not used to such attention from secular, white-owned news media. That was evident when the room designated for the press was closed so a group of supporters for a bishop candidate could use it to prepare to cheer on their choice.

Despite the occasional presence of a local publicity person, information was very hard to come by during the convention. It was, frankly, one of the most difficult weeks in my then-eight years of reporting.

I recommend that when covering such a convention, if officials are reticent, the reporter should search out people who are willing to talk—average convention-goers and local church members and officials who are glad such a convention is taking place in their locale.

For example, there were estimates of more than 10,000 blacks visiting Orlando during the convention. Where did their money go? They wanted their money to reach and support black businesses as much as possible. So, for a story in the A-1 section, I joined a bus tour of black neighborhoods, interviewed a black resort manager and a state legislator concerned about attracting black tourists.

Another story that made A-1 looked at a tradition that was old news to the average AME Church member but probably new information for most readers of the *Sentinel*. The campaign for bishops—which went through the night—is a big deal, with hoopla that rivaled that of the presidential race.

I was the only member of the Religion Newswriters Association who attended the quadrennial convention. Others might have if they had received information about newsworthy events that might have been worth the trip.

But I suspect that AME Church leaders weren't prepared to pitch their convention to the nation's religion reporters because some had hardly dealt with

reporters in their local communities.

Changes in local coverage are especially important because, like white churchgoers, black church members are often more concerned about what's happening in their church and their community than what is decided at occasional national meetings of their denomination.

If reporters want to improve a newspaper's coverage of the black church, one of the first things they can do is simply visit some congregations.

Church newsletters also may include information that can lead to stories. If reporters request being put on the newsletter mailing list of several large black congregations, they might discover that guest speakers for a church's Men's Day or Women's Day—often big events in black churches—may be worth a feature on the weekly religion page or elsewhere in the newspaper.

Reporters also should try to meet with black ministers with notebook handy, but not necessarily for a next-day story. If they just sit and talk with ministers over breakfast (a group meets often for breakfast at an Orlando barbecue restaurant), the clergy can get to know the reporters, who, in turn, can ask the ministers about possible story ideas without the pressure of an immediate deadline.

Reporters and editors can work together to demonstrate an increased commitment to coverage of black churches. They can invite some church leaders to a meeting at the newspaper office and/or suggest a meeting in a predominantly black neighborhood to hear criticism of past stories and suggestions for future ones.

Coverage of the black church by local newspapers should involve both inclusiveness and special attention.

For instance, a traditional story about how more folks turn out for services on Easter Sunday than on a typical Sunday could easily include quotes from black ministers and white pastors. This year, I wrote a story about the Easter hat tradition and quoted hat and religion experts on the fact that hats are more popular in black churches than in white ones. The photos that went with the story and the lead of the piece featured

black women.

The previous Easter, my story on the portrayals of Jesus included an example of a nontraditional play featuring a black man who depicted Jesus as a homeless man, embodying the poor whom Jesus urged his followers to love.

Certain issues merit stand-alone stories. In a project I completed in 1991, a front-page story explained the whys of segregated church services. The story began with an anecdote recalled by a local Free Methodist church pastor. A white couple came to his church, which had the largest Free Methodist church ad in the Yellow Pages, only to discover it was a mostly black church. They stayed for the service but never returned.

A local black minister, whom I quoted in the story, is now working on a dissertation on that topic. I hope his work will be the focus of a follow-up story.

In Orlando, several predominantly black churches have started programs targeting young black males to prevent them from being counted among prison statistics. I wrote a story on this trend, quoting an official at the Congress of National Black Churches in Washington, who confirmed that historically black denominations had called on member congregations to provide programs and support for young men and boys.

Other examples of stories include one I wrote about the get-out-the-vote efforts of a black gospel radio program host during last year's election campaign and a more recent story based on my interview of a Florida librarian who published a book exposing FBI reporting on black churches and their leaders.

I remember a white reporter at a Binghamton, N.Y., paper joking that the best trick black ministers could play on reporters was to take a vacation during the last week of January. Sad to say, he had a point. At the time, the mid-1980's, the paper had major coverage of blacks only during Black History Month.

As newspapers contend that they are being more inclusive of blacks in their coverage, one thing they can do to achieve that is to plan ahead, at least when working on nondeadline stories. Many black churches do not have the

luxury of large staffs or full-time secretaries. In many cases, the ministers have another job. Thus, a quick call to a mostly black church at 4 p.m. on Thursday before turning in a weekend story will probably result in an unanswered phone call, and an article that lacks a black perspective.

Another pitfall to avoid when covering black churches is to only cover predominantly black denominations, such as the African Methodist Episcopal Church, the Christian Methodist Episcopal Church, or the National Baptist Convention USA, Inc.

Black Catholics, for example, should be remembered as sources of interesting stories. I attended a local diocesan assembly of African-American Catholics and met people whose experience ranged from having priests barely shake their hands at the end of mass to being elected to prominent leadership positions in lay organizations. The director of black and Haitian ministries for the local Catholic diocese has proven to be a valuable source who often has a different perspective on issues than his Protestant colleagues.

The Rev. George Stallings's founding of an independent black Catholic church demonstrated that some African Americans were not comfortable with the traditional Catholic Church. Even before 1989, when Stallings started Imani Temple in Washington, the Catholic Church was working to make blacks within the traditional church feel more welcome.

Finding black congregations that are part of mostly white denominations may require a bit of a search, but the perspective of members and clergy from these churches can broaden the views of some readers. Stories that include them not only introduce new names in print, but begin to erase the stereotype that any black churchgoer is automatically Baptist. Regional denominational offices probably would be able to give reporters examples of local predominantly black congregations.

In Orlando, there are predominantly black Presbyterian, Lutheran and Episcopal congregations. Clergy from these three churches have held positions leading the local ministerial alliance, fight-

ing the construction of a highway through a black neighborhood and overseeing programs of their national denomination.

Another habit to avoid is choosing one black minister, such as the one with the largest congregation in town, as the spokesman for the black church. Just as one white minister cannot speak for all white church members or clergy, one black minister can't speak for all blacks. Spread those quotes around. Know the names of pastors other than the heads of prominent black organizations who are also clergy.

Possible sources can be obtained by attending meetings of black groups such as the local chapter of the Southern Christian Leadership Conference or an interdenominational alliance of black ministers.

Editors should realize that the religion reporter is not the only one who should be quoting the black minister who may head a black organization. For example, when the L.A. riots erupted last year, I attended the first meeting led by a black minister to help local people answer the question, "What do we do now?" But future stories were covered by the minority affairs reporter.

The same reporter wrote about a local church's unusual program to help recovering drug addicts.

A news features reporter wrote about a private school, started by a black church, that aims to educate students with black teachers who serve as role models and curricula that include black history as a regular part of classroom lessons.

Coverage of the black church, in other words, is not solely the responsibility of the religion reporter. These congregations will fit into stories on social issues, African-American traditions and other topics that could be covered by reporters responsible for other beats.

Other beat reporters can benefit from contacts first gained by religion reporters. For instance, when I received a church newsletter that featured the black business owners in the congregation, I passed it on to the business reporter who covers minority businesses.

In addition to stories, I think news-

papers can reduce complaints about inadequate coverage of blacks by keeping churches in mind for stand-alone photos and pictures that accompany stories. When I was looking for a black congregation to photograph for the Easter bonnet story, one of the first churches I called was a church whose minister has criticized Sentinel coverage on a community forum radio program. (Unfortunately, the church was having a casual day the Sunday before Easter, so hats were not expected.)

I think newspapers are beginning to pay more attention to black churches. In April, a week before the verdict in the federal trial of the Los Angeles police officers, The Orlando Sentinel ran a front-page story from The Orange County Register about churches' taking major roles in the rebuilding process after last year's riots. More stories like these are needed to give readers insights into the every-day (and not just Sunday) work of the black churches. As we reporters discover and write such stories, I suspect a rapport between the media and the black churches will develop.

But representatives of black churches also must attempt to be more tolerant of the news media's interest in them. Past mistakes and outright exclusion by some newspapers should not become an immovable barrier to improved coverage. Black clergy and church members cannot just sit back and wait for the media to come to them. They must be proactive, just like everyone else who wants to see their name in the paper. When a reporter does show up or call to cover a story dealing with the black church, officials need to cooperate and help along the process.

Reporters and editors need to hear suggestions, criticism, and congratulations from black clergy and churchgoers. Letters to the editor and phone calls to the reporter or his or her editor can and should effect change.

I'm not convinced that neither the news media nor the black churches have done enough to get the story of the black church out. But there are rich opportunities to improve such coverage if cooperation, tolerance and sensitivity prevail. ■



# Religion and International Affairs

## *Faith Can No Longer Be Relegated to a Private Sphere In World Where State Sovereignty Is Limited*

By J. BRYAN HEHIR

The old question of religion and politics, the relationship of spiritual and temporal power, has a new and sharper edge to it in the 1990's. During the last decade the role of religion as a catalyst for change—at times destructive, at other times constructive—was evident in Central America and Central Europe, in South Africa and South Korea, in the Philippines and in the Middle East. Each of these situations had its own causes and complexity, but the pervasive role of religious ideas and leaders was evident to the most casual observer. In the 1990's the pattern continues, most dramatically in the Balkans but also in Haiti, as well as in the new states emerging from the collapse of the Soviet Union.

In reporting and analyzing the changing pattern of international affairs, the press faces today a challenge that also confronts academic specialists, policy

advisors in governments and the staffs of international corporations. The challenge is how to assess the deeper forces of change in world politics, which have swept away the Cold War configuration of states and ideologies, and left all of us—specialists and citizens alike—with very different issues of foreign policy than we have faced for the last 50 years. From Somalia to Sarajevo the most difficult questions today are strikingly different from the dangers of superpower confrontation, nuclear deterrence and endless negotiation about arms control, which consistently absorbed the headlines and the attention of senior policy officials for the last four decades.

The role that religion plays today within societies and across the international spectrum of states should be understood as one piece of the broader pattern of an altered agenda of world politics. This article attempts to locate the religion and politics question within this wider framework, and to suggest perspectives for integrating the role of religion into the analysis of international relations.

*J. Bryan Hehir is Professor of the Practice in Religion and Society at Harvard Divinity School. He is also a Fellow at Harvard's Center for International Affairs, and Chaplain to Catholic students at Harvard and Radcliffe. A senior advisor to the American Catholic bishops on international affairs, he is an expert in both moral theology and foreign policy, and a columnist for Commonweal, a biweekly review of public affairs, religion, literature, and the arts. This year he received the Catholic Book Club's annual Champion Award.*



### **I. World Politics: Dimensions of Change**

The global politics of the 1990's are the product of two major shifts in the life of states and nations. The first has been a change in the structure of power in the world; the second, a change in principles of international order. The alteration of the structure of power was a revolutionary process, occurring as it did in a very brief period of time, with relatively little violence and affecting the entire pattern of world affairs. The structure of power that defined the post-World War II era was bipolar in character and nuclear in its content. The two superpowers dominated world politics, and the nuclear threat they posed to each other and to the world was the defining reality of statecraft. Between 1989 and 1991 the bipolar structure of power collapsed, and analysts since then have been trying to make sense of what structure of power will fill the void. Proposals abound: Charles Krauthammer is confident that a unipolar world, with the United States as the remaining superpower, is our fate and our future.

Henry Kissinger has advised us that we should watch for the emergence of a multipolar world encompassing the United States, Russia, Europe, Japan and China. Joseph Nye finds neither of these views convincing, and sees the emerging structure of power as militarily unipolar (the United States), economically tripolar (the U.S., the European Community and Japan) and at a third level of relationships, multipolar, with corporations and international

institutions competing and cooperating in the shadow of the unipolar and tripolar configurations of power.

The debate about what the structure of power will be is the topic that attracts the most attention in the scholarly and policy communities. It is the other major change, in the principles of international order, which needs more attention. Its implications are potentially as significant as the changing structure of power and it is precisely the *combination* of both changes—the structure of power and the substance of international relations—that creates the challenge of world politics in the 1990's.

It is by focusing upon the changing principles of international order that the role of religion and politics can be grasped in relationship to the other major elements of world politics. The essential fact of change is the movement beyond the Westphalian order of international relations. The Treaty of Westphalia (1648), which ended the religious wars in Europe, bequeathed a double legacy to international relations.

First, its political-moral legacy was recognition of the sovereign state as the basic unit of world politics, and the establishment of the principle of nonintervention as the fundamental rule governing relations among states.

Second, its political-religious legacy was to separate religion from the political order; the primary purpose of this move was to deny that religion should be used as a reason for intervention in the life of other states or societies. The effect of the move was to create the impression that religion should be treated as an affair of personal life, but not a publicly significant reality in society. This "privatization" of religion was carried forward by the democratic revolutions of the 18th Century which established the context for the modern version of religious pluralism. In the setting of religious pluralism, religious communities have a public role, but the dynamic in such a polity stresses the need to guarantee each citizen private space in which to choose any faith or no faith; the public role of religion is acknowledged in principle but is often not considered a major force in society.

The proposition being argued here is that the facts of international politics in the 1990's do not correspond to the Westphalian vision of the world—a world of totally sovereign states, abiding by the principle of nonintervention and relegating religion to the sphere of private meaning, but not public significance.

On all three fronts, sovereignty, nonintervention and religion and politics, the Westphalian order stands in need of revision.

Both the political-moral and the political-religious dimensions of Westphalia must be adapted to the character of world politics in the 1990's. This call for revision does not mean disposing of the principles of Westphalia; there is a wisdom embodied in its principles, but the wisdom can be retained only if it is reshaped to accommodate the changing fabric of international relations in this decade.

Sovereignty, for example, was conceived in the Westphalian framework in absolute terms; a sovereign state was presumed to be master of its destiny politically, militarily and economically. This notion of sovereignty has been persistently eroded since the end of World War II. Human rights standards, emerging from the United Nations, challenged the moral autonomy of states; the international community was entrusted with a responsibility for human rights abuses *within* other states. The nuclear relationship of the superpowers challenged the classical notion of sovereignty; neither superpower could defend its borders; each could only deter attack by the threat of retaliation. Finally the fact of economic interdependence, supplemented in the 1990's by the threat of ecological catastrophe, renders the borders of states porous, and ties the destiny and material welfare of societies together in way that defies claims of absolute sovereignty.

The fact of the 1990's is that the status of sovereignty is shifting; the world will continue to be a community of sovereign states, but political analysts and public officials alike are in search of a new understanding of the role and limits of sovereignty.

To change the definition of sovereignty is to call into question the norm of nonintervention. The Westphalian principle was based on a clearly defined choice: international peace between states was to be valued over justice within states. In the Westphalian order the threat to peace posed by a permissive rule of intervention was granted much greater significance than the need to protect human rights within states. The Cold War reinforced the Westphalian logic; while the superpower rivalry generated some interventions for ideological and/or strategic reasons, the danger of direct superpower confrontation—either by accident or miscalculation—restrained intervention in the most volatile areas of global conflict. During the Cold War, therefore, intervention was restrained both by principles of order and rules of prudence.

One of the consequences of the post-Cold War era is that the danger of big power intervention is lessened and opportunities for intervention are growing. Faced with this conjunction, scholars and diplomats alike are more willing to call into question the Westphalian ethic of nonintervention. Here again, however, the call is for revision, not overturning the norm of nonintervention.

The dynamic of the contemporary policy debate moves in the direction of maintaining a *presumption* against intervention, and broadening the *exceptions* that would justify intervention, particularly if it is carried out under multilateral auspices.

The political-moral legacy of Westphalia, is, therefore, under scrutiny in the 1990's, and revision is underway at the level of fact and principle. There is an equally compelling need to recast the political-religious legacy of Westphalia.

## II. Religion and Politics: Fashioning a Public Conception

The problem with the Westphalian conception of the role of religion is that it can hardly account for the influence

religion currently exerts in the lives of states. There is an irreducibly personal dimension to religious faith—in the end, individuals believe and commit themselves to the discipline of a faith. But it is equally true that religious convictions take social shape and exert public influence. The role of Catholicism in Central America and Central Europe in the 1980's, and the role of Islam in the Middle East and beyond cannot be explained or understood through the lens of personal faith. Both the press and political analysts today acknowledge the visible and at times crucial role of religious communities in political conflicts and social change. Often, however, there are not categories available to transcend the Westphalian view of how religion functions in society.

Which categories of analysis would yield a better conception of the public role of religion? The suggestions that follow are not exhaustive, but may help move the debate about revising Westphalia forward. First, to argue for a more explicitly public role for religion within states and in international relations, one must acknowledge the double role religion has played in the political order. Religious convictions can help to draw societies together in pursuit of common objectives, they can foster concern for others, respect for the dignity of each person and they can impose restraints on the abuse of power and the resort to force. But the same themes can be used to divide societies and states into camps of opposing ultimate views thereby reducing the space for political compromise, which is often the price of peace. Religiously generated efforts to legitimate some use of force but not all uses, can be transformed into a doctrine of holy war.

In brief, religion must not only be invoked, it must also be used carefully—with restraint and moderation—in the claims it makes in the public order. Part of the motivation of Westphalia was a desire to remove the temptation to use religion in pursuit of political goals. But the method employed—depriving religion of public meaning and significance—sacrifices too much, and seeks to fit religion in a box that cannot contain it. People in

many cultures still find in the great religious traditions resources which can enhance the public life of their societies.

Visions of a more just order, mandates to protect the poor and vulnerable, principles to restrain conflict and establish the basis for peace are ideas locked in the repository of religious traditions. Communities resort to them particularly when the social and political fabric of a society is under pressure. The task incumbent upon religious communities is to be guardians of a wise use of religious ideas; others in society, domestically and internationally, have a stake in seeing this task fulfilled, so the public role of religion matches its best potential.

Second an understanding of the public potential and the public role of religion would be enhanced by greater awareness of the location of religious communities in the international arena. Ivan Vallier in an essay over 20 years ago ("The Roman Catholic Church: A Transnational Actor") called attention to the transnational potential of one major religious actor. More recently Samuel Huntington has described ("Religion and the Third Wave", "The National Interest") the way in which the transnational character of the Church was placed in the service of promoting human rights in the 1970's and 1980's.

The original insight of Vallier can be extended and expanded; religious communities function easily and with much historical experience across national boundaries. In an increasingly interdependent world, transnational institutions have a comparative advantage.

Most religious traditions have been fulfilling a transnational role without articulating its rationale or expending resources to refine an adequate strategy. There is room here for developing the understanding of what the transnational potential of various religious traditions is in our time.

Third, an understanding of the public role of religion requires a grasp of the three principal resources that religious traditions bring to society. They are ideas, institutions and a community. The role of religion in public life

should not be thought of primarily as the exercise of power, in the style of a state or a corporation. At their best, religious traditions exercise influence in a less direct fashion than wielding power. Influence in the first instance flows from the way religious ideas shape the vision of citizens and groups in a society. In the Christian tradition, for example, teaching on church-state relations provides categories for assessing the legitimacy of a state, the limits that should be placed on state power to protect the conscience and life of citizens and the purposes for which state power should be used in society. Social teaching on justice and human rights provide criteria for assessing the moral character of the economic order and for building a public strategy to enhance the status and welfare of the poor in a society. To miss the role of religious ideas is to misunderstand the primary way in which religion exerts public influence.

The institutional role that religion plays can vary with the religious tradition. Catholicism, for example, has an extensive network of educational and social institutions at the international, national and local levels of political life. Other traditions are less visible through social institutions. But the general role of religious institutions is a double one. They create a pluralistic structure of society, providing restraints on state power, and often balancing the power of other nongovernmental groups. And they provide the means for religious institutions to be present at the faultlines of social existence: to support family life, care for the sick, provide education and social welfare service and be a public voice of advocacy in society. This institutional role is often taken for granted in a democratic society. Its pervasive potential, however, is always recognized by authoritarian and totalitarian states, which usually try to contain or suppress the institutional role of religion.

Finally, the ultimate influence of religion in a society and across state lines is the community of people who adhere

*continued on page 55*

# Who Reads Religion News?

*Study Shows a Believing Public Wants Wider Coverage Than Secular Journalists on Newspapers Offer*

BY STEWART M. HOOVER

WITH BARBARA HANLEY AND MARTIN RADELINGER

It has been widely noted that religion coverage has been a problem for journalism. Whether in the daily press, magazines, or broadcasting, religion has not found as wide an acceptance as have other specialty beats. Even though the American public is now, and always has been, remarkably religious (at least in contrast with the other major Western democracies) the press has generally not given religion much space or attention.

Instead, religion coverage has been marginalized. The typical coverage pattern at one time was for religion to appear in a once-a-week (usually Saturday) church page, which carried both church ads and church announcements. Such an approach did not even necessitate a religion reporter per se. Where there was a religion reporter (sometimes called a church editor) that person rarely saw his or her output placed anywhere beyond the "ghetto" of this church page.

Recently religion coverage has become less marginal. While its extent is hard to document, a number of trends and events seem to have combined to bring about this change. The stand-off with the Branch Davidians near Waco was only the latest of such events. In the mid-1970's, conservative religious movements began to gain ground and a born-again Christian, Jimmy Carter, was elected President. The Islamic Revolution in Iran in 1979 signaled a resurgence of politically significant religious

movements abroad. The televangelism scandals showed that religion stories can also be about sex and graft. The Jonestown incident shocked the world. Simply put, religion "happened" and increasingly found its way into the front section of newspapers.

The increasing presence of religion in the news placed newspapers in the position of having to re-think and re-evaluate some preconceptions about religion coverage. It also revealed that there has been little or no research on reader habits and expectations of the religion beat, while some major questions need to be answered.

These questions fall into two major categories. First, religion is seen as a local beat at many papers. Is this a realistic view in an era when so much of national and international import is taking place in the world of religion? Second, and linked with the notion of localism, is the fact that religion is often covered as a primarily parochial issue, with the stress placed on the beliefs and behaviors of specific local groups. Is this what the readership expects? Does this reflect the totality of their interest in things they would call "religion" in an era when religion is changing and the media's views of what makes religion news is also changing?

Judith Buddenbaum in 1990 suggested that while recent apparent improvements in religion coverage have come about because there are many stories that simply must be covered, there are still problems with the approach. She sets out four criticisms of religion coverage: 1) that there still isn't enough of it; 2) that there isn't enough variety in what is covered; 3) that the coverage tends to be too shallow; and

4) that coverage sometimes appears biased, either against religion in general, or against certain particular religious expressions.

There are a number of studies which have confirmed that coverage has traditionally been meager. Other voices, such as those who are advocates for particular religious perspectives seem to feel that the major defect in religion news is that it fails to promote or defend particular religious groups and expressions, and is thus biased. Such charges of bias are hard to confirm empirically, but reinforce the general sense of dissatisfaction with coverage.

In 1983 David Shaw documented changing interests in religion at newspapers by interviewing religion writers and outside observers. He found a growing consciousness and commitment to religion on the part of newspapers, but continuing problems with uneven levels of coverage, a tendency for coverage to underplay the wider implications of religion for broader cultural and social issues and a continuing overall sentiment on the part of the newspaper industry that failed to grasp exactly how

---

*Stewart M. Hoover, Ph.D., is an Associate Professor in the School of Journalism and Mass Communications and an Associate of the Center for Mass Media Research at the University of Colorado at Boulder. Barbara Hanley and Martin Radelfinger are doctoral candidates at Temple University in Philadelphia. The research reported here was supported through a grant from the Lilly Endowment, Inc., and was carried out with the help of Religious News Service, Inc. The authors gratefully acknowledge the assistance of these two organizations.*

significant religion is to much of their readership. Shaw quoted Ben Bradlee, executive editor of *The Washington Post*, as feeling that religion coverage is only justified because papers "get a lot of [church] ads, and they have to put something around it."

In 1983 Terry Mattingly investigated the perceptions of the religion beat within the newsroom itself. "The role religion plays in America and the world has been a well-kept secret in most of the nation's newsrooms," he observed. While he saw momentum, progress was slow. He identified religion as almost unique in its needing constantly to defend itself against the suspicions, ignorance, and indifference of editors and colleagues.

Mattingly identified other aspects of the religion beat that combine to bring about the uneven coverage it receives: religion is a complex beat that combines tangible and intangible elements; religion seems to fit best when it satisfies standard news categories, such as when the story happens to be a scandal, and religion is uniquely considered by many journalists to be a personal, private and local matter. In the final analysis, Mattingly saw hopeful signs on the horizon, including the fact that more and more religion writers were coming to the beat with the professional training and education that qualified them as experts and more and more papers were seeing religion as a specialist's beat.

It seems safe to assume that there has been recent improvement in the status and quality of religion coverage at the nation's newspapers. At the same time, it is clear that many traditional understandings of the news industry about the religion beat, and some emerging

ideas, could benefit from being tested through research.

For instance, there appears to be no normative definition of religion news underlying today's coverage practices and traditions. The assumptions of localism and parochialism in reader interest need to be tested. Further, there is a growing sense that changes in the religion beat are related to changes in the form and shape of contemporary religion. Thus the impact of the fading of traditional establishment religion and the rise of new religions such as the New Age Movement and neo-fundamentalism deserves attention.

To address these issues, we carried out two national random sample surveys of 1,100 adults to measure general issues of media behavior, interest in religion coverage, and perception of the importance of various definitions of religion news.

The first survey focused on religiosity and news readership measures. These were personal, not telephone interviews, and allowed us to administer more complex items than would have been possible over the telephone. The focus of the second survey was directly on the question of religion coverage, definitions of it and preferences within various categories of coverage. The surveys were conducted in 1988 and 1989 by the Gallup Organization.

### The National Surveys

The first survey was intended to establish baseline relationships between various measures of religiosity and religious interest and newspaper readership. The second survey contained more refined measures of quali-

tative interest in religion coverage, based on pilot testing and the results of the qualitative congregational interviews. (See Table 1.)

While it should come as no surprise to us given the widely noted religiosity of the American public, it is still noteworthy that the vast majority of daily newspaper readers are religious people. One way to look at this is presented in Table 1 which compares the reported frequency of newspaper reading among our sample with the "importance of religion in their lives."

As can be seen there, there is little difference in reported frequency of reading newspapers between those for whom religion is "very important," "fairly important" or "not very important." Nearly the same percentage of each of these categories report reading a newspaper every day, and it is a large percentage. As with the overall figures for various classes of religiosity, vast majorities reported reading a paper every day. Members of evangelical churches reported less frequent reading than did others, Catholics slightly more frequent reading.

Denominational membership is not the only factor that defines variation in American Protestantism, however. There is as much variation in belief within some denominations as between them. This tendency, which Martin Marty has called the "two-party system of American Protestantism," has been a major factor in the recent unrest in Protestant churches. Specifically, the rise of the evangelical movement over the last 15 years has found expression in ways quite distinct from church membership. Simply put, there are evangelicals within non-evangelical churches, and vice versa. As a measure of this factor, we used the simple question of whether the respondent considered him or herself to be "born again" or "evangelical" (30 percent of respondents answered "yes"). Table 2 demonstrates that, while there is some difference in newspaper readership between those who consider themselves to be "born again" and those who do not, the difference is again quite small. (See Table 2.)

Those who consider themselves to

**Table 1:**  
Newspaper Readership By Religiosity

	Importance of religion		
	Very	Fairly	Not Very
Reading Frequency	%	%	%
Every day	71.6	69.4	73.6
A few times a week	23.3	23.7	19.2
Once a week or less	4.60	6.5	7.3

**Table 2:**  
**Newspaper Readership By Two Party Dimension**

	Born-Again	Non Born-Again
Reading Frequency:	%	%
Every day	67.3	72.5
A few times a week	27.0	21.0
Once a week or less	5.4	6.2

be "born again" are less likely by five percentage points to report that they read newspapers every day. We found, however, that they were much more likely than others to be regular readers of religious periodicals. In general, the data suggest that the general readership for daily newspapers is both fairly religious (much more so than would be the case in other Western industrial countries, for instance) and not generally as exposed to the specifically "religious" press as would be the case if they were looking to that source for information about religion.

Where they do look is to the "secular" press.

Table 3 reports responses to the question "how important is it to you, personally, that the newspapers you read cover religion?" Overall, 65.5 percent of all respondents felt it was at least "fairly important" that newspapers cover religion. Among those who reported reading newspapers every day, 66.1 percent felt it was "very important" that those newspapers cover religion.

**Perceptions of Coverage**

It seemed from qualitative interviews we had conducted that readers have a clear understanding of the structure of the typical newspaper. That is, they understand the difference between the "front" and "back" matter in the newspaper, and understand the difference between the hard news sections of the paper and the sections devoted to features and softer news. While it also appeared from those interviews that defining newspaper coverage of religion as only a feature or soft beat is a limited vision of its place in the paper it is nonetheless the case that a major way

it is defined, and can be measured, is as a stand-alone identifiable department or feature.

This is the basis on which much qualitative analysis of religion coverage is done, both within the industry and outside it. How religion stacks up against sports or food or entertainment is one way newspapers and their readers evaluate the priority it gets.

With that in mind, the second national survey presented respondents with a list of nine special-interest topics. Respondents were asked to rate, on a scale of one to seven, how important it was to them, personally, that the newspapers they read cover each of these topics. Table 3 presents the overall score of each item, ranked highest to lowest. (See Table 3.)

Religion was not the highest or lowest ranked in interest. Surprisingly, it did come out ahead of sports in overall interest, though the difference in their scores is small. We next looked at rankings within demographic subgroups, in order to investigate whether religiosity or demographic differences lead to differences in perception of the

**Table 3:**  
**Importance of Nine**  
**"Special Interest" Topics**

	Scores
Education	5.69
Health	5.60
Business	4.85
Food	4.54
Religion	4.50
Entertainment	4.40
Sports	3.46
The Arts	3.78
Personal Advice	3.72

importance of these topics. Education and income differences seemed not to make much difference in rankings. Neither did gender, with the exception that men ranked business and sports higher than did women.

There was a difference in ranking for those who call themselves "born again," who ranked religion coverage much higher than those who do not call themselves "born again." There were also interesting differences by size of community of residence. Table 4 presents these scores for people who live in small (under 50,000 in population), medium (between 50,000 and 1 million), and large (over 1 million) communities. The order of categories presented in Table 4 is the same as in Table 3. (See Table 4.)

It is not too surprising that the score given to religion was highest among those who live in the smallest communities, and the lowest for those who live in large cities. This may be misleading, however, as respondents in the larger cities scored all categories lower than did others. When the rankings alone are considered, religion ranked fourth for both the smaller and medium-city dwellers, and slipped to sixth for those who live in large cities. Thus there do appear to be differences between people who live in smaller and larger cities in their interest in religion coverage.

There were also regional differences in perception of the importance of religion coverage. Residents of the South and Southeast ranked religion as higher in importance than did residents of the New England states or the Far West.

Table 5 reports responses to the question of which of these nine topics respondents were "most likely to read." This was a forced choice. Respondents could only choose one "most important" (seven on the scale) one "next most important," and so on. (See Table 5.)

The most striking thing about this list is that the order came out nearly the same as with the earlier item where respondents scored topics by their inferred importance rather than their likelihood of reading them. Readers seemed to be reporting behavior in ways consistent with their beliefs about what it is important for newspapers to cover.

**Table 4:**  
Size-of-Place Differences in Importance of Religion as a Special Interest Topic

	Small	Medium	Large
Education	5.85	5.90	5.49
Health	5.75	5.49	5.63
Business	5.15	5.17	4.82
Religion	5.23**	4.56**	4.03**
Food	4.66	4.23	4.48
Entertainment	4.25	4.45	4.53
Sports	3.88	4.34	3.94
The Arts	3.87	3.67	4.08
Personal Advice	3.70	3.52	3.57

**Table 5:**  
Likelihood of Reading Special-Interest Topics

Education	6.65
Business	5.82
Health	5.60
Entertainment	5.04
Food	4.81
Religion	4.56
Sports	4.22
The Arts	3.99
Personal Advice	3.88

The male-female differences in ranking on this item were not large. Women ranked religion slightly higher than did men. Those who call themselves "born again," however, ranked religion much higher than did others. Size-of-place and regional rankings were similar to those on the earlier "importance" item.

As a final measure of readership interest and response to religion coverage, respondents were asked to rank the paper they most often read for the quality of its coverage of the nine special interest topics. Table 6 reports results for this item.

(See Table 6.)

Again, the score represents relative position on a seven-point scale, where seven is the highest score and one the lowest. What is remarkable here is the sharp reversal of position of both sports and religion. While religion generally ranked a bit higher than sports in the various ratings of importance of religion coverage, when readers were asked to rate actual coverage, the roles were

**Table 6:**  
Respondents' Satisfaction With Coverage by Newspaper Most Often Read

Sports	5.74
Business	5.29
Entertainment	5.18
Education	5.00
Food	4.99
Health	4.76
The Arts	4.67
Personal Advice	4.39
Religion	4.32

reversed. The message is pretty clear, readers do not feel that the newspapers they read do a very good job of covering religion.

Is there a difference in this perception depending on the size of the newspaper they read? Table 7 compares this item by circulation size of the newspaper most often read. Small papers are those with a circulation under 50,000,

medium papers those with a circulation between 50,000 and 200,000, and large papers those with circulations over 200,000. (See Table 7.)

While the satisfaction scores overall are higher for the large papers, the ranking of items (their order) came out nearly the same as for the smaller papers. For the large papers, religion remained at the bottom of the list in satisfaction. For the medium papers, it ranked eighth out of nine. It ranked highest for the smaller papers, but still only seventh out of nine. Simply put, smaller papers were perceived by their readers to be doing a slightly better job covering religion than other papers.

Respondents were next asked directly how frequently they read religion news when it does appear in the newspaper. Some interesting gender and "two-party" differences were found. Table 8 presents the male-female results, and Table 9 the differences for those who say they are "born again evangelicals" and others. (See Tables 8 and 9.)

Women and evangelicals seemed much less likely than men or non-evangelicals to read religion news when it does appear in the newspaper. This is not consistent with other aspects of religiosity and religious behaviors, where women and evangelicals generally express higher levels of religious interest than do their cohorts. However, it is consistent with overall newspaper reading behavior, where men are, for instance, much more likely than women to report regular newspaper reading. It seems that women are more

**Table 7:**  
Satisfaction With Coverage by Circulation Size of Newspaper Most Often Read

	Circulation Size		
	Small	Medium	Large
Sports	5.39	5.58	5.31
Business	4.98	5.13	5.11
Entertainment	5.02	4.98	5.28
Food	4.88	4.56	4.84
Education	5.02	4.33	4.67
Health	4.46	4.51	4.86
The Arts	4.13	4.03	4.59
Personal Advice	4.04	3.70	4.03
Religion	4.26**	3.90**	3.52**

**Table 8:**  
**Frequency of Reading Religion News by Sex**

How frequently do you read religion news when it appears in the newspaper?	Women	Men
	%	%
Whenever it appears	19.6	28.6
Frequently	12.3	18.6
Occasionally	22.9	21.5
Infrequently	18.4	17.3
Just about never	25.7	3.9
Don't know	1.0	0.2

likely to report preference for, or interest in, religion news, but men are more likely to actually read it. The same tendency holds for born-again versus non born-again respondents.

**Definitions**

Definition of what constitutes religion news was one of the major objectives of this study. In order to test definitional ideas with this national sample, a list of 16 types of religion coverage was developed. This battery was intended to directly test the hypothesis that religion-news interest is primarily local and parochial. Therefore, the list was presented so that local and parochial concerns were first, with the scope of coverage moving outward conceptually and physically from the respondents' home locations. Table 10 presents the complete list of response types in the order in which they were administered. (See Table 10.)

**Table 9:**  
**Frequency of Reading Religion News by Two-Party Dimension**

	Born-Again %	Non-Born-Again %
Whenever it appears	11.3	0.7
Frequently	8.3	19.0
Occasionally	20.1	23.3
Infrequently	25.5	13.9
Just about never	34.3	12.4
Don't know	0.4	0.7

Respondents were asked again to score each of these 16 types on a seven-point scale. Table 11 presents the overall results of this item, with the categories ranked from highest (most important) to lowest (least important) rated. (See Table 11.)

This was perhaps the most surprising result of the entire survey. Far from being oriented only toward local and parochial interests or issues of faith experience, respondents overall seemed to have a trans-local and universal scope in their interest in religion news.

Further, the findings that 1) high percentages of newspaper readers are interested in religion, 2) that they expect religion coverage, 3) that most of them do not turn to religious sources for news that fits this interest, and 4) that they are generally not very satisfied with the coverage that religion gets from the daily press, paint a picture of religion news that is far removed from the traditional or "received" definitions of it.

To the extent that there was support in these data for the localism/parochialism hypothesis, it held more strongly for women than for men. Women ranked local church news and local religious issues higher than did men. However, interest in social and ethical issues, and the positions and pronouncements of faith groups on social issues, was higher for both men and women than we might have expected. This also turned out to be the case for the other demographic classes which are the more traditionally religious: "born again" evangelicals; older people; residents of smaller communities; residents of the South, and lower-education and income respondents; all seemed to be more interested

**Table 10:**  
**Sixteen Categories of Religion Coverage**

1. Stories of individual faith experiences.
2. Local church news and announcements.
3. Coverage of local religious issues besides church news and announcements.
4. Coverage of national religious groups and denominations.
5. Coverage of the ecumenical movement and cooperation between religious groups.
6. Coverage of the beliefs of various religions besides your own.
7. Coverage of major American religious movements (such as fundamentalism, evangelicalism, the charismatic movement, etc.)
8. Coverage of "alternative" or "new" religious movements (such as the "new age" movement, cults, etc.).
9. Coverage of national religious issues and controversies (such as scandals, textbook controversies, etc.).
10. Coverage of the role of religion in American politics.
11. Coverage of the role of religion in foreign or international politics (such as the middle east, Iran, Northern Ireland, etc.).
12. Coverage of ethical and social issues.
13. Coverage of social and ethical positions and pronouncements by major faith groups (such as on abortion, nuclear policy the economy, etc.).
14. Presentation of opinion and commentary (such as columns or editorials by major religious leaders).
15. Presentation of humor or cartoons relating to religion.
16. Results of surveys or polls on religious topics.



than others in the local issues. However, these groups generally reported lower levels of news readership than did others. Those who report higher levels of news readership (men, for instance) are the ones who are the least interested in local and parochial religion coverage.

### Summary and Conclusions

These national surveys confirmed many of the impressions from our qualitative interviews. We found that religious people are also newspaper readers. This should not have surprised anyone, but somehow it did. The idea that religion was not of interest to journalism seemed to indicate that it was not of interest to readers. This turned out not to be true.

We know from other surveys that the typical American reports a high degree of religious belief and behavior. It was thought to be possible that regular newspaper readers might be atypical in this regard and, consistent with the idea of secularization, less interested in religion than cohorts who read newspapers less frequently. However, regular newspaper readers did not significantly differ from the general population in this regard.

These findings, taken together, suggest that there are a great number (indeed, a majority) of readers who consider themselves to be religious people, yet who do not read religious publications. It would not be surprising to find

them sharing the view of some of our qualitative interviewees that the secular media are where they turn to find significant information about religion.

These findings suggest that the basic assumptions about readership interest in religion may be misperceptions. Readers understand the news process fairly well and understand what kinds of things qualify as news. They see much that could fit in the newspaper that does not. They are not expecting newspapers to cover their own local group so much as they expect religion in general to find its way into the news in general. They would like to see more evidence in the papers that religion is an important part of daily life.

These data also have some important things to say about the broader relationship between religion and the media in contemporary American life. The widely expected secularization of society is not as complete as many, particularly those in the news business, have thought it to be. Religion is no longer a story that can be covered by covering its institutions and establishments, however. Events in the Middle East, Northern Ireland, and in Washington have also become religion news.

The media have begun to respond. The news audience seems to be asking that, as they do so, they keep in mind a vision of religion news as news, not as a localized and parochial beat that can be defined entirely in terms of formalized, institutional beliefs and practices.



**Table 11:**  
Mean Scores of Religion Coverage Types

Positions and pronouncements	4.77
Ethical and social issues	4.63
Local church news, announcements	4.34
Local religious issues	4.29
Religion in American politics	4.26
Foreign or international politics	4.25
National issues and controversies	4.22
National groups and denominations	4.11
Other religions besides your own	4.01
Ecumenism and cooperation	3.96
Opinion and commentary	3.96
Faith experiences	3.83
Surveys or polls	3.66
American religious movements	3.61
"Alternative" or new movements	3.49
Humor or cartoons	2.91

## Why God Didn't Die

*continued from page 8*

itself: do these disparate apocalyptic predictions—secular or religious, Pentecostal or postmodern—have anything in common?

For many people this is a non-question, and any talk at all about our era coming to an end is distinctly unpleasant, the more so when it comes from the mouths of religious people. Even granting—as many do—that the pillars of our civilization sometimes seem shaky, if not rotted out, is a worldwide Pentecostal revival any way to replace them? Must we choose between our present descent into triviality and relativism, and what to many appears to be a throwback to obscurantism and zealotry? Is the Pentecostal upsurge Toynbee's "internal minority" from which a fresh new cultural renewal will flower, or a frantic abandonment of some of the hardest won prizes of the modern sensibility? Is it a sign of hope or another symptom of decay? Or is it just talk, yet another nut wearing a sandwich board with some grim religious warning lettered on it?

The great scholar of religion Victor Turner once suggested that millennial movements are to a culture what rites of passage are to an individual. They signal moments of change and transition. They enable the person or the society to touch base with the past and with their deepest symbolic roots in order to be better prepared to take the next—sometimes frightening—step into the future. But such movements cannot be taken literally. They need to be interpreted both in the light of the mythic structure within which they are located and in relation to the environing culture. The earnest fellow with the placard warning us that the end is near may have something important to tell us, but his message may not be what he thinks it is. What then is the message?

Pentecostalism began around the turn of the century as a radical millennial movement, teaching that Jesus would come again any day and that the powers of healing and prophesying that were being showered on believers were signs

of the End Time. Since then, Pentecostalism has not only grown but also matured. At this point, nearly a century after its birth, instead of marking the end it may be providing a spiritual bridge into the next—dare we call it “postmodern”?—era of human history. I believe the Pentecostals are onto something, but what they are onto may not be what they (or at least most of them) think. Nor is what they are onto obvious. It does require decoding. But how can this be done?

So far we have been looking at Pentecostalism from the perspective of the outsider. For the many millions of people who are very much insiders, however, the whole thing looks and feels quite different. They see themselves as grateful beneficiaries of a wondrous and unprecedented stirring of the Spirit, an outpouring that has already radically transformed their own lives and is certain to change many more. They believe the message they carry is good news for a desperate age and that it marks a welcome new gift of grace and wholeness for the world. Their own interpretation of what their religion means is important, and not just as a curiosity.

This has a special importance for journalists. It means that in trying to grasp the meaning of Pentecostalism they cannot just rely on scholars but must also pay special attention to those who interpret its significance from within. The decoding will require a special mixture of inside and outside information that is not easy to come by. Indeed, is there anyone who really understands this planetary spiritual conflagration that has come to pass—almost like a divine ruse—just as the analysts were confidently announcing the decline of religion or the death of God?

Lots and lots of people, of course, have tried in various ways to grasp the meaning of Pentecostalism. Sociologists, theologians, anthropologists have all taken their turns. But the picture they paint is confused and contradictory. They point out that Pentecostalism seems to spread most quickly in the slums and shantytowns of the world city. Is it then a revival among the poor?

Well, they concede, not exclusively. Its message also appeals to other classes and stations. Its promise of an unmediated experience of God, and of health and well being here and now, not just after death, attracts a wide variety of seekers to congregations where they bask in the warm support of fellow believers and—perhaps most of all—gain a sense of dignity and direction in a world that otherwise offers them little of either.

But just who are these people? Again the picture is not uniform. They vary in color and gender and nationality, though the brown, black and yellow predominate. They may be teenagers or old folks though young adults lead the way. They may be poor or located somewhere in the lower ranges of the middle class; there are not many well-to-do. They are what one writer calls the “discontents of modernity,” not fully at home with the reigning values, beliefs, and lifestyles of whatever one might mean by the “modern world.” One scholar describes the movement as a “symbolic rebellion” against the modern world. But they often seem just as dissatisfied with the religions of the traditional world, which the modern one is so systematically subverting. For this reason, another writer describes them as providing a different way of being modern.

Both may be right. Their dislike for both the traditional order and for certain aspects of modern society may help explain why Pentecostals welcome the idea that God is not too pleased with “this world”—with its admixture of old and new—either, and that its days are numbered. Paradoxically, though some sociologists believe Pentecostals have been uprooted and dazed by the pace of contemporary change, this spiritual movement’s demanding moral disciplines and organizational training often equip them to cope with it better. Refugees from the multiple tyrannies of both tradition and modernity, they are provided with what it takes to survive until a new day dawns.

But how much does this tell us? Are sociological or psychological analyses really enough to explain such a truly massive and worldwide phenomenon?

One historian has called the Pentecostal surge the most significant religious movement since the original rise of Islam or the Protestant reformation. But these historic upheavals have for centuries defied attempts to explain them in merely secular categories, however sophisticated. The present Pentecostal wave also seems to slip through such conceptual grids. More and more, even the most skeptical observers are beginning to concede that—whether for weal or for woe—something undeniably significant, maybe even epochal, is underway. Further, the same observers are coming to believe that whatever is happening is not confined to some special religious or spiritual sphere. They see it as one indication of a much larger and more sweeping change.

Granted, there are lots of reasons to doubt whether such a Big Change is actually at hand. It is true that in philosophy and literary criticism something called “post-modernism” is the rage of the journals. But intellectuals like to imagine themselves on the cutting edge, and post-modernism could be one more pedantic self-delusion. Gurus and crystal gazers talk about a “New Age,” but they sound suspiciously like the aging hippies who 20 years ago were hailing the imminent dawning of the Age of Aquarius. The “new world order” Desert Storm was supposed to introduce turned out be something of a mirage, and elsewhere in the international political arena we seem to be reeling backward in time to an era of ethnic and tribal blood letting, not moving forward to anything very new at all. There is every reason to share the skepticism of Ecclesiastes about whether there is ever any “new thing under the sun.”

Still, despite the overheated atmosphere that will no doubt excite even more utopian fantasies and millennial scenarios before 2000 A.D. arrives, the question stubbornly persists. Do the Pentecostal movement and the global religious stirring of which it is undoubtedly a part signal something larger and more significant that is underway?

My own answer to this question is at least a qualified “yes.” Having pondered the Pentecostal movement for several years and in many different coun-

tries I have a strong hunch that it provides us with an invaluable set of clues, not just about the wider religious upsurge but about an even more comprehensive set of changes. Further, I believe these changes are not just religious ones, but that they add up to a basic cultural shift for which the overtly spiritual dimension is not just the tip of the iceberg, but also the stream in which the iceberg is floating. I do not see this change as the beginning of the Last Days, as some Pentecostals do. I do see it however as a major reconfiguration of our most fundamental attitudes and patterns of perception, one that will ultimately alter not just the way some people pray but the ways we all think, feel, work and govern.

I think my hunch is well-grounded. As a life-long student of religious movements—Christian and non-Christian, historical and contemporary, salubrious and demonic—I have come to believe two things about such movements. The first conviction is widely shared among my colleagues today, namely that religious movements can never be usefully studied apart from the cultural and political milieu in which they arise. I do not believe religious phenomena are “caused” by other factors, economic or political ones for example. Still, they always come to life in close connection with a complex cluster of other cultural and social vectors.

I have also come to a second working premise, one that is not as widely shared among my colleagues. It is that although religion neither causes nor is caused by the other factors in a complex cultural whole, it is often a very accurate barometer. It can provide the clearest and most graphically etched portrait, in miniature, of what is going on in the larger picture. Freud once said that dreams are the royal road to the unconscious. This may or may not be the case, but I am convinced that religion is the royal road to the heart of a civilization, the clearest indicator of its hopes and terrors, the surest index of how it is changing.

The reason I believe religion is such an invaluable window into the larger whole is that human beings, so long as they are human, live according to patterns of value and meaning without

which life would not make sense. These patterns may be coherent or confused, elegant or slap-dash, rooted in ancient traditions or pasted together in an ad hoc way. People may adhere to them tightly or loosely, consciously or unconsciously, studiously or unreflectively. But the patterns exist. They are encoded in gestures, idioms, recipes, rituals, seasonal festivals and family habits, doctrines, texts, liturgies and folk wisdom. They are constantly shifting, mixing with each other, declining into empty usages, bursting into new life. But they are always there. Without them human existence would be unlivable. And they constitute what, in the most inclusive use of the term, we mean by “religion,” that which binds life together. Even that most famous of atheists, Karl Marx, once said that religion is “the heart of a heartless world.”

Naturally, just as it takes practice and experience to “de-code” dreams, it also requires a considerable amount of insight to understand what the densely coded symbols and practices of religion tell us about its host culture. Religions always contain a mixture of emotional and rational elements, often fused into powerful compact bits of highly charged information. Understanding them calls for a particular form of what anthropologists call “close reading.” But the result is worth the effort. Knowing the gods and demons of a people and listening to their prayers and curses tell us more about them than any other collection of profiles and case histories one could assemble.

It is too early to speculate what impact the Pentecostal movement, as varied as adherents are, will have on politics, government, education, business and society in general, but there it will certainly be considerable.

Why did God not die? I suppose I was reluctant to answer the inquiry from Time because, in the final analysis the answer lies beyond anyone’s grasp. But I believe that by paying attention to the present, unanticipated worldwide explosion of Pentecostal Christianity, as a window into the even wider resurgence of other religious movements, we may find a few hints. And in thinking about the Big Questions, that is the best we can ever hope for. ■

## Challenge of Pluralism

*continued from page 11*

A Vietnamese monk in Phoenix told one of our researchers, “We must take the plant of Buddhism out of the pot and plant it in the soil of Arizona.” What will Buddhism become as it takes root in American soil? As laity take over many of the roles of monks? As monks adapt their lives and monastic rules to demands of a Thai American congregation in North Hollywood? As women take on roles of teachers, roshis, Zen masters? We pose these as research questions, but the answers are still tentative, still in the making.

What will Islam become in the U.S. with so many Muslim cultures converging in Houston—Pakistanis, Indians, Trinidadis and Syrians—all now Americans and all Muslim? How will the emergence of pan-Islamic organizations like the Islamic Society of North America influence the history of American Islam? Will there be a more “ecumenical” Reformed Islam, somewhat like the Reform Judaism that developed so distinctively in the U.S.? What will Hinduism become in the U.S., where an ancient, complex tradition now has to develop means of transmission that are brand new, such as weekend classes or youth summer camps? Hindus from India who were never asked, “What do Hindus believe?” are now having to answer that question—in their neighborhoods and offices, in schools and P.T.A. meetings. The Northern California Hindu Businessmen’s Association has published a simple reference card to “The Ten Commandments of Hinduism”—a real innovation in a tradition that has never been codified or formulated in such a way. In some countries of Asia, temples and mosques may have state or royal patronage; one did not belong to a particular temple as a “member.” In the U.S., however, these religious communities need to recreate themselves with a network of voluntarism, with membership lists for tax-exempt status, with newsletters and fund-raising dinners. In short, many of

these communities have begun to generate the whole infrastructure of denominationalism.

Finally, with this new multireligious landscape, the United States is changing too. What will this wider range of cultures and religions mean to American life? This is our third question. The national identity crisis of the last five years, taking the form of the so-called "culture wars" and the current multiculturalism debate is about this question of our complex identity. Who do we mean when we say "we"? It is the most important question any people can ask. "We the people" of the United States is an increasingly diverse "we." In a world in which the "we" is being defined in ever more narrow ethnic or religious terms, the experiment of America is well worth watching.

There are public emblems of the changes that are happening. One of the U.S. astronauts on the Challenger was a Buddhist American. The newly elected mayor of Kuntz, Texas, not far from Houston, is a Muslim American. The senior vice-president of a major Boston technology think-tank is a Hindu American. On June 26, 1991, a Muslim imam, Siraj Wahaj of Brooklyn, opened a session of the U.S. House of Representatives for the first time. In February of 1992, Imam W.D. Muhammad of the Chicago-based American Muslim Mission opened a session of the U.S. Senate with prayer, again the first Muslim ever to do so.

We may be Christians in the majority, Jews and Muslims next, then Buddhists and Hindus, but the majority is pledged to preserve the foundational liberties, of all minorities. There are many, however, who do not recognize this wider and more complex "we." There are still advocates of prayer in the public schools, like the Christian Coalition and Catholic alliance in New York City, who imagine that the prayer would be a generic Judeo-Christian prayer—not a prayer from the Rig Veda, the Qur'an, or the Pure Land school of Buddhism. And those who insist on teaching "creationism" as the view of the divine origin of creation imagine unthinkingly that this means teaching the God-centered creation story of Genesis. But what about

the unfolding of creation from the lotus which grows from the navel of Lord Vishnu in the Hindu creation account? The new complexity of American religious sets these persistent old agendas in a brand new context.

In April of 1990 the city council of Savannah, Georgia issued a proclamation in which Islam is recognized to have been "a vital part of the development of the United States of America and the city of Savannah." The proclamation acknowledges that "many of the African slaves brought to our country were followers of the religion of Al-Islam." In light of this, the mayor and the city council of Savannah proclaimed that "the Religion of Al Islam be given equal acknowledgment and recognition as other religious bodies of our great city."

Festivals are also ready markers of a culture's presence. The Chinese New Year parade in New York is an old institution, but the Sikh Vaisakhi Day parade is new. The city that measures its official holidays by the suspension of alternate side of the street parking has added the two Islamic feast days—Id al Fitri and Id al Adha—to the official list. In San Francisco, the city issued a proclamation marking the end of the annual festival honoring the deity Ganesha. The article in *India Abroad* on September 6, 1991 read, "Mayor Art Agnos has issued a proclamation declaring September 22 Golden Gate Ganesha Visarjana Day. It is believed to be the first time that the mayor of a city in the United States had honored the Hindu deity."

Americans all carry coins with the motto *E Pluribus Unum*—Out of many One. But given the more complex landscape of America—culturally and religiously—America now has the opportunity and challenge to think anew about what that might mean. What is meant by this term pluralism?

First, I would want to insist that pluralism is not the sheer fact of this plurality alone, but is active engagement with plurality. Pluralism and plurality are sometimes used as if they were synonymous. But plurality is just diversity, plain and simple—splendid, colorful, maybe even threatening. Such diversity

does not, however, have to affect me. I can observe diversity. I can even celebrate diversity, as the cliché goes. But I have to *participate* in pluralism. In the Elmhurst area of Queens, for example, a New York Times reporter found people from 11 countries on a single floor of an apartment building on Justice Avenue—all living in isolation and fear—each certain that they were the only immigrants there. This is diversity to be sure, but it not pluralism.

Pluralism requires the cultivation of public space where we all encounter one another. Where are those public spaces? Certainly universities where the curricular and non-curricular issues of multiculturalism are boiling on the front burner. Public schools and school boards have also become the venue of this encounter with the discussion of the new Houghton Mifflin social studies texts in California and the publication of the "Declaration of Cultural Interdependence" in New York. Hospitals as well have had to confront critical issues of cultural and religious diversity in the face of crisis and death. Every one of these public institutions is experiencing the new tensions in appropriating a more complex multicultural sense of who the "American people" now are.

But where is the encounter that takes explicit account of the deep differences of religion? Religion is the unspoken "r-word" in the multicultural discussion. It is present just beneath the surface in the heated multicultural debate. It is often in interfaith councils that religious issues can be raised to the surface and interreligious relations discussed as such. The last 10 years have seen the genesis of a few effective interfaith councils at the local and metropolitan level—in Los Angeles and Washington, in Rochester, Wichita, Tulsa and San Antonio. Councils of churches have become councils of churches and synagogues. Then the Muslims joined, or the Buddhists and Hindus. Yet the process of developing this interfaith infrastructure is just now beginning in many cities. When a Hindu temple in Pittsburgh was vandalized and its sacred images smashed, or when a mosque in Quincy, Mass. was set ablaze by arson, or when a Vietnamese monk in Dallas found a

cross burning in his front yard there was no infrastructure of relationships in place to respond.

Second, I would ask whether pluralism does not ask more of the encounter with one another than simply tolerance. Tolerance is a deceptive virtue. In fact, tolerance often stands in the way of engagement. Tolerance does not require us to attempt to understand one another or to know anything about one another. Sometimes tolerance may be all that can be expected. It is a step forward from active hostility, but it is a long way from pluralism.

Part of the problem is recognizing how little we do understand one another and how much our mutual perception is shaped by common stereotypes. Americans as a whole have a high degree of religious identification, according to every indication by George Gallup, and yet a very low level of religious literacy. Every high school graduate is required to dissect a frog, but every high school graduate is not required to know something about Islam—the religion of a fifth of humankind. Few school systems have academic study of world religions built into the social studies curriculum. Few seminaries training leaders for churches and rabbinate have any required courses in the basics of other faiths—even though the local context of ministry in the U.S. today will surely require such fundamental literacy. One of our researchers working in Oklahoma City in the summer of 1991 spoke with a city official about her survey for the Pluralism Project. His interest aroused by her effort, he offered, “You know, there’s a Jewish mosque right down the street!” It turned out to be a Greek Orthodox church.

Finally, pluralism is not simply relativism, but makes room for real commitment. In the public square or in the interfaith council, commitments are not left at the door. On the contrary, the encounter of a multicultural society must be the encounter of commitments, the encounter of each other with all our particularities and angularities. This is a critical point to see plainly, because through a cynical intellectual sleight of hand, some critics have linked pluralism with a valueless relativism—an

undiscriminating twilight in which “all cats are gray,” all perspectives equally viable, and as a result, equally unconvincing.

The encounter of a pluralistic society is not premised on achieving agreement, but achieving relationship. *Unum* does not mean uniformity. Perhaps the most valuable thing we have in common is commitment to a society based on the give and take of civil dialogue at a common table. Dialogue does not mean we will like what everyone at the table says. The process of public discussion will inevitably reveal much that various participants do not like. But it is a commitment to being at the table—with one’s commitments.

The United States is in the process of negotiating the meaning of its pluralism anew. In this new struggle to understand the American “we,” the role of religion in our multicultural society will inevitably be discussed. The new religious communities of the U.S. are presently finding their own ways of participation in the public square. The American Muslim Council has been formed to be a focal point for the discussion of Muslim participation in the political process. At its meeting in February the issue of what a Muslim political action committee in a non-Muslim country might be was hotly discussed. The Islamic Medical Association brings the concerns of American Muslim doctors to bear on medical ethics. African American Islam—both in its orthodox Sunni stream and in the Nation of Islam—brings Islamic moral values to the crisis of drugs and violence. The International Network of Engaged Buddhists seeks to bring the insights of Buddhism and its philosophy of the interdependence of all things to bear on the environmental debate. The Jaina Association of North America considers the issues of animal rights and the extinction of species in light of the long Jaina tradition of non-violence toward all creatures. As the questions and the answers of the new American religious communities are brought to the table in the various forums of public life, the meaning of “pluralism” reaching beyond the sheer fact of our plurality will be tested for its strength again and again. ■

## Catholicism

*continued from page 26*

coming more diverse and privatized, and is finding its way into the news in new and different ways and places.

“I think that is what we are seeing today in our newspapers and in the other media.”

There are several things to say about that. The first thing to say, undoubtedly, is thank you to Richard Harwood for an exceptionally candid statement. Another of my personal impressions over the years has been that religious people and journalists alike often talk nonsense when they talk about religion and the media. Harwood talked turkey.

Let us be grateful he did.

At the same time, I disagree with him on a number of points. For example, he betrays a secularist (not merely “secular”) bias in calling the efforts of religious bodies and individuals to participate in the civic debate an “intrusion” into an area (“secular affairs”) where they have no proper place. I do not read the First Amendment as prohibiting religious participation in the process by which public policy is shaped, for the logical conclusion of such a reading is that only secularists have full citizenship rights.

For immediate purposes, though, that is somewhat beside the point. The fundamental problem with Harwood’s analysis, as far as media coverage of the Catholic Church is concerned, is that it does not go far enough.

Harwood argues that in reporting on internal controversies in the Catholic Church, the media simply have covered an ongoing story of general interest and have done so just as they cover similar stories relating to other social institutions (“The story of religion in America is starting to resemble other stories, and can be covered by the conventions applied to other stories”). My contention is that, at least where the Catholic Church is concerned, the media have not just covered the story but, to some extent, made themselves part of the process they were covering.

This goes back to a point made in the Lichter in several different contexts. It is this: In reporting on internal controversy in the Church, the four media examined tended to present it as a struggle between the leadership of the Church (pope and bishops) and everybody else (lower clergy, religious, Catholic laity, non-Catholics). On the neuralgic issues of sexual morality, for instance, Lichter and his colleagues report: "Church teachings on sexual morality were endorsed almost exclusively by members of the hierarchy. Nearly nine out of ten statements (88 percent) from clergy at the level of bishop or above supported the Church's teachings. Priests and members of religious orders below the level of bishop were even more unified on the opposite side—91 percent of their quotes opposed Church teachings. Members of the laity and non-Catholics were also overwhelmingly opposed (86 and 85 percent opposition respectively). The overall effect was to present the debate over sexual morality as a split between the Church hierarchy and everyone else."

But wasn't this an accurate picture of the debate among Catholics?

My answer is: No—at least, not at the beginning. In the mid-1960's, when this debate got underway among Catholics, most accepted the Church's teaching on sexual morality, whether or not they consistently lived by it in all cases. Over the last three decades, however, it may very well have become an accurate picture, at least in the United States and other Western countries. Polling data confirm that this movement, from assent to dissent, has taken place. It seems clear that the repetition by the media of this story line—"the pope and the bishops are nearly the only ones who think this way"—has helped bring it about.

Harwood approvingly quotes Richard Brookhiser's description of American churches as "internalizing the mores" of American secular culture. The Lichter report strongly suggests that, at least in American Catholicism, the media have contributed to this outcome. And that, I submit, is not part of their job. The editors' introduction to the proceedings book mentioned above sums up this way:

"Do the data and the personal impressions brought together in this volume show a persistent practice of anti-Catholicism on the part of major secular media in the United States? Readers will judge for themselves.

"There is, however, ample evidence here that Catholic dissent received copious and respectful attention from these media over the past three decades, while the beliefs and values of Catholics loyal to the magisterium [teaching authority] of their Church did not fare so well. In the editors' view, that points to at least one major conclusion: The mindset dominant today in elite American media—call it secularism, call it the liberal zeitgeist, call it postmodern deconstructionist individualism—has found a better way to undermine the Catholic Church than was ever dreamed of by the old, religiously-inspired anti-Catholicism. It has learned to be selective and to reward Catholic dissent."

Here is where Anna Quindlen comes in. I trust it is clear that I am not picking on Ms. Quindlen as an individual—a foolhardy enterprise at best. I cite her merely as a kind of symbol of what I am talking about.

Several months ago I took part in a day-long conference on media coverage of religion involving two dozen or so working journalists, academics and others. (I leave out the details deliberately, in order to protect the innocents.) Toward the end of the afternoon I felt moved to speak more or less as follows:

"Anti-Catholicism is an old problem in the United States, and there is even a history of anti-Catholicism in American journalism. Still, I don't speak often or casually about 'anti-Catholicism in the media.' The situation these days is more complex than that expression suggests.

"Consider the op-ed page of The New York Times, where Anna Quindlen, a Catholic of the dissenting school, often airs her disagreements with the Pope and Cardinal O'Connor. Fair enough. She is a talented journalist. The Times obviously is entitled to publish her. I don't question that.

"But allow me to ask this rhetorical question: Would the Times op-ed page regularly give Cardinal O'Connor the

same opportunity to state his view of Catholic doctrine that it regularly gives to Anna Quindlen? Or if that is unrealistic (and I'm sure it is) would the Times give the same opportunity to someone else who thinks pretty much as the Cardinal does about these things? I think the question answers itself."

My remarks were not well received.

A former Times writer asked me huffily whether I thought the Times should not publish Anna Quindlen.

That's not the point, I said.

Well then, he demanded, what did I think the paper ought to do?

Not for me to say, I replied. I'm trying to describe a problem, not prescribe its solution.

But it was left to another former Times writer, a woman who said she'd been raised a Catholic but didn't practice Catholicism any more, to make the most telling comment on what I'd said.

Anna Quindlen gets a lot of hate mail, she began. ("There are crazies everywhere," I replied. I might have added that I get hate mail, too—it's an occupational hazard for anyone who puts ideas in print.) But the heart of the matter, she continued, is this: American secular society has its own values and its own imperatives, and it will act according to its values and satisfy its imperatives no matter who objects. As for those who don't share these values and accept these imperatives—too bad.

Exactly. Couldn't have put it better myself. There is a dominant American secular culture, of which the elite media are an integral, important part. This culture's message to those who don't agree with it on many topics which are part of civic discourse is: Conform or watch out.

Partly at least, journalists play the role of enforcers on behalf of the secular culture, rewarding those who conform and punishing those who don't. And although media treatment of the Catholic Church cannot be explained simply by this pattern of reward-and-punishment, nevertheless to the extent that there is a problem here, this is the problem I now see. ■

## Southern Baptists

*continued from page 29*

for human origins—and culminating in the fact that Jesus was born of a virgin, worked miracles, was resurrected bodily and would return some day in glory. It meant, too, upholding the belief that God, through Scripture, had meant for men alone to be pastors (1 Timothy 3) and for pastors to have clear authority over laity (Hebrews 13:17).

To lose this fight meant ruin for the denomination. One had only to look at other Protestant bodies—the “mainline” churches of the Methodists, the Presbyterians and others, who had lost members and national influence for years—to see where the departure from orthodoxy could lead.

The way to save the day was by electing presidents determined to use their appointive powers to place vigilant trustees on the boards of every denominational agency and seminary who would move against evidence of liberalism whenever it appeared.

Those who opposed this interpretation of events took a markedly different view of what was happening in their denomination. They saw a “takeover” in the works, led by authoritarian pastors. Raw power was the issue, they said, predicting that those directing this takeover would carry out a bloody purge of the seminaries and agencies, while also attempting to bring the denomination into a political alliance with the right wing of the Republican Party.

As I said above, this story is one best told in stages, as it has unfolded. Away from the exciting annual conventions, events that affected real people were occurring. Thus, in the fall of 1986, in Atlanta, the domestic missions agency voted to cut off aid to churches that called women as pastors. Some female seminary students turned up to watch and at least one wept with rage after the vote. The following year, the president of a seminary often cited as overly liberal resigned after clashing with his trustees in Wake Forest, N.C., touching off an upheaval on campus that eventually cut student enrollment in half. In

July 1990, the denomination’s executive committee fired the editors of the in-house news service, Baptist Press.

A month later, members of the other faction, the so-called “moderates” gathered in Atlanta and formed their own organization, the Cooperative Baptist Fellowship, which has gone on to raise money for their own missionaries, seminary and news service. Last December, Jimmy Carter announced his support for the movement. A few months earlier Clinton allowed that his sentiments lay with the moderates, too.

To return to where I started, I recalled that the new convention president in 1988 said he wanted to be called a “Bible-believer.” From the time I had begun covering the Southern Baptists two years before, I had never felt satisfied with the labels available. For some time, the terms fundamentalist and moderate had circulated within the denomination to distinguish the two factions, and I chose to use them in my news stories. The news media have never been of one mind in this: Other reporters whom I respect have instead opted for the labels conservative and moderate to describe the two sides.

In choosing to call the dominant faction fundamentalists, I occasionally drew their complaints, with some arguing that the word was emotionally loaded, having become associated in the public mind with Islamic militants in the Middle East. I think that point has some validity. Yet I reminded them that the label itself derives from an American source—those early 20th Century Protestants who took on the “modernists” in their denomination.

These men printed a series of pamphlets called “The Fundamentals,” which upheld belief in the infallibility of Scripture, Jesus’s virgin birth and bodily resurrection and various biblical miracles.

When I wrote the story of our interview, I noted that the new convention president “has been identified with the fundamentalist faction.” But I also said that he did not want to be known by that label, preferring instead to be called a Bible-believer. It seemed fair. ■

## Judaism

*continued from page 31*

ries, and non-Jews don’t learn anything particularly interesting about their Jewish neighbors.

At least, though, the writer recognizes the existence of Jews and their religion. One particularly disturbing trend in journalism is a tendency to ignore the Jewish aspect of stories that have obviously Jewish angles.

Howard Kurtz of *The Washington Post* pointed this out when he wrote about *The New York Times*’s coverage of the appointment of a new president at Yale.

“When Richard C. Levin was named president of Yale University last month, *The Times* neglected to mention that Levin will be the first Jewish president in Yale’s history—a relevant detail because the exclusive university limited the number of Jewish students as recently as 25 years ago,” Kurtz wrote in a recent *Outlook* article.

“There was some discussion among the editors, and the decision was not to get into it,” the *Times*’ reporter on the story, Maria Newman, told Kurtz, “The feeling was that it’s time that things like that aren’t important.”

Things like that are important to many Jews, though. I spoke to several Jewish Yale alumni after Levin’s appointment and each one mentioned, some in terms of wonderment, the fact that their alma mater’s new president is Jewish.

In an interview, Kurtz said he felt that the *Times*’s decision to withhold this piece of information may stem from the general perception that Jews have made it in American society.

“I think that Jews have become assimilated enough and successful enough so that it is not big news when a Jew becomes the head of such-and-such institution,” he said.

But he did say that withholding the Jewish angle about a once-anti-Semitic institution was a clear indication of “oversensitivity.”

This sort of oversensitivity exhibits itself in other ways. Frequently, there is in stories about obviously Jewish people

no mention of the person's Jewishness, though code words are often used. Take the recent story about David Geffen in *The New York Times Magazine*. Profiled is a person described as a Brooklyn-born, knish-eating son of a couple named Abraham and Batya who nevertheless is never explicitly identified as Jewish. Geffen's Jewishness is obviously a factor in his personality and development, not only because he grew up in a distinctly Jewish milieu but because the story reports that he gives money to help resettle Ethiopian and Soviet Jews in Israel. But the reader never learns more than these snippets of information, which is unfortunate, because leaving out Geffen's Jewish side seems to be leaving out an aspect of his character readers should know about.

The *Times* reporter on the Levin story said she thinks it may be time to downplay the importance of ethnicity or religious background in stories about newsmakers. But this belief is based, I think, on an assumption that the mention of such details is embarrassing, or somehow negative. This oversensitivity is based on another assumption—that cultural and religious differences shouldn't matter, or already don't matter.

They do matter, though. The majority of Jews in this country want more information about the affairs of their people, which might explain why so many of them read Jewish-oriented newspapers.

Stories about the Middle East peace talks, or articles about Jews who eat matzos on Passover and fast on Yom Kippur, do not satiate their demand for information. What's missing is depth, and an understanding that for many Jews, ethnicity and religion still matter. ■

## President's Religion

*continued from page 35*

Moyers began his remarks by acknowledging the presence of Marion Hays, the widow of Brooks Hays whose stand against segregation cost him his Congressional seat in Arkansas in 1958. Moyers portrayed Hays as the archetypal Southern Baptist politician, that is one who "resisted the handcuffs of ideology." Moyers related the story Hays told in his last campaign. Pointing to the dog next to him he said, "Old Fergus here, who goes with me every day, is a liberal when he's sniffing through the bushes looking for a rabbit, but a conservative when he buries the bone." What Moyers seemed to be getting at it was the fact that there is a strata of Southern Baptists who, despite appearing to be pretty conventional socially, nevertheless are capable of some pretty progressive politics. The preacher in Moyers was saying to Clinton and Gore that this pragmatic nonideological history is their history.

Moyers also recited the dimension of the ethos of the Southern Baptist congregations, which were constitutive for creating such pragmatic politicians. Baptists, Moyers said, do not relegate religion to the private sphere. While historically they champion the separation of church and state, they do not enforce the hermetic exclusion of religion from politics. The relationship between politics and morality is seen as absolutely vital to creating common ground for action in society. Moyers elaborated, "We believe Harvey Cox got it right when he said that in secular society 'politics does what metaphysics once did, it brings unity and meaning to human life and thought.'"

The church itself was a laboratory for democracy. Every office of the church was subject to the vote of the congregation. The pew and not the pulpit was exalted. The result, according to Moyers, was that they fought a lot. "My father said Adam and Eve must have been the first Democrats because only Democrats could mess up Paradise, and he was certain Cain and Abel were the first Baptists because they introduced fratricide to the Bible. But faith called us to

a public stand and there was no place in our politics and religion for bystanders. It never occurred to us ask the Irishman's question, 'Is this a private fight, or can anyone get in?' We knew from our past that politics is where liberty is saved or lost, where issues are decided, justice mediated, and values defended. Neither church nor state are served by anemic democracy. So Baptists plunge into the thick of the fray. And we do so with an ardor for equality that springs from the hot coals of faith."

Moyers, while not speaking for Clinton, was certainly making a case that might be Clinton's. These aspects of the Baptist tradition, the democratic congregational polity, the search for the public and political implications of faith and the pragmatic independence from the right and the left, can go a long way in clarifying who Bill Clinton is.

What is the overlap between the particular strands within the Southern Baptist and Roman Catholic traditions that influence Clinton? First, both see a public role for religion. Religion makes demands upon the believer to bring particular values from the tradition to bear upon policy decisions. Second, both traditions have segments that have not capitulated to either the left wing of the Democratic Party or the right wing of the Republican Party. Third, both take the Biblical tradition seriously in their ethics, if in different ways. Finally, both are socially embodied arguments. Community life and identity as well as rational justification are seen as important. Christianity is not reducible to a finite set of rules delivered once for all to the saints. Discipleship under these circumstances requires argument, interpretation, critique and change.

Beyond the Roman Catholics and the Southern Baptists is the question of Hillary Rodham Clinton. The extent of religious influences in her life are just beginning to be studied. Her prominence as a Methodist layperson and her interest in the "politics of meaning" certainly need exploring because of her role in making policy.

Powerful religious influences are at work in the White House. The Clinton Presidency cannot be understood unless those influences are explored. ■



## Shirley MacLaine's Appeal to Editors

*Shirley MacLaine, the actress, spoke at the convention of the American Society of Newspaper Editors on April 2. Here are excerpts from her talk:*

The editors of America can lead the way to help explore the individual journey to the deeper, non-physical dimension. You are in a position to enable wide public discussion of the source which underlies so much of the conflict in our world today. Strides have been made, certainly, to understand the spiritual imperative, but they have been done in a political way, in a pop psychological way.

For a long time the examination of historical events has been reduced to social, economic or cultural analysis; spiritual factors are seldom credited as actually being the driving force behind so much human behavior. But we can't understand these conflicts unless we grasp that human beings are moved more by non-material appetites and ideals than anything else, and that people are prepared to suffer for what they hold to be true, true politically, true physically and true metaphysically....

Instead of asking newsmakers where they stand on a given political issue, it might be even more revealing to ask them where they stand on deeper, more spiritual, questions involving themselves. When they find the answers for them-

selves, they will know more of what to investigate in others.

Why not look at some practical means by which American editors and journalists could effect a profound facilitation of all rights granted under the First Amendment to the Constitution?

First, grant open and unembarrassed recognition of the spiritual dimension in the life of each individual and the role that that dimension plays in the affair of mankind.

Second, inquire and analyze the spiritual natures of world policy makers, including leaders of industry, government, candidates for other, or others who move forward to attempt to impose their views and to order the events of our times.

Third, provide prominent or special columns, public forums for the discussion of spiritual, moral and ethical issues, whether or not it relates to ongoing events.

Fourth, create a news beat which covers the expansive metaphysics of spirituality, religion and ethics. Or, if this type of beat already exists, elevate it to a position of greater importance in the reporting of daily news. ■

## Foreign Affairs

*continued from page 41*

to a faith. In the end religious ideas are held by individuals and given social significance by the way individuals use them as citizens, professionals and advocates for change in a society. It is in terms of religion as a community that the personal and the social significance of faith becomes visible and effective. Individuals and groups are gathered, motivated and grow in a shared vision of faith within a religious community.

Obviously the *quality* of religious faith as it is held by individuals is one test of the effectiveness of a religious tradition. But the ability to have access to a large segment of the population on a continuing basis by itself gives religious communities social significance. At crucial moments in public life—one

thinks of the Philippines, Poland or Iran—the access to a population as a whole puts a religious community in a position to exercise decisive influence.

In the world of the 1990's, religion promises to be part of global politics. To grasp its role and interpret its significance in specific moments of crisis, major institutions—governments, the academy, the press—need to cultivate an awareness of the daily public role of religion. Past assumptions about religion as primarily private do not provide the resources for this task. As we rethink sovereignty, intervention and international affairs as a whole, the press can play a role in helping to revise the limited conception of religion and politics found in the Westphalian order. ■

## Constraints

*continued from page 5*

age it?

The space constraints of daily journalism also influences editors and reporters to strain for the kind of crisp conclusions and definitive outcomes that seldom emerge in the world of religion, where many things change over centuries rather than months.

Five years ago, I hoped to report religious debates and divisions in ways that did justice to believers' own theological and spiritual categories rather than reducing them to political, sociological or psychological conflicts. I also wanted to give voice and visibility to those people and positions that get squeezed out when conflicts involving religion are reported only in terms of two sides—conservatives and liberals; orthodox and dissenters—rather than the spectrum of perspectives that normally exist.

Finally, I hoped to report the way that ordinary people lived out their religious faith in their work and family lives—lawyers, bankers, teachers and store clerks. Not just members of unusual, colorful religious groups—who are often highly articulate about their reasons for departing from the religious mainstream—but the kind of people who read *The Times*.

This last goal that has proved most elusive. Ordinary people, particularly middle-class and professional people, tend to be private about their religion, uncomfortable about avowing it and how it has affected their marriages, their career choices, crucial decisions about children, parents, education, income, politics or lifestyle.

In the years to come, I want to write about Hinduism, Islam, church and state, papal policies, the impact of feminist consciousness on religion; but the middle-class American spiritual life still seems the most mysterious frontier. ■

# Racial Tensions in the Press

In the space of two years, the major newspapers in Philadelphia, Boston and Washington, all of them liberal voices, found themselves torn by bruising racial controversies. "A House Divided," from "Media Circus: The Trouble with America's Newspapers," by The Washington Post's media reporter.

BY HOWARD KURTZ

Two stories in the morning paper caught Donald Kimelman's eye. One involved a report from a black research organization, which found that half the nation's black children were living in poverty, usually with single mothers on welfare. The other noted that the Food and Drug Administration had approved a new contraceptive called Norplant, in which small capsules are implanted in a woman's arm.

Kimelman, 43, was deputy editorial page editor of The Philadelphia Inquirer. The son of a former U.S. ambassador to Haiti, he had graduated from an exclusive New Jersey prep school and had come of age as a 60's liberal. He had been a VISTA volunteer and worked for George McGovern's presidential campaign. But as he approached middle age, Kimelman had grown more skeptical of government solutions. He was increasingly troubled by the problems of the underclass and felt the country needed a new approach to poverty, one that transcended the old liberal-conservative arguments.

Now, on the morning of December 11, 1990, he kept thinking about Norplant. He mentioned the idea to his boss, David Boldt, who agreed he should write an editorial. Kimelman sat down at his computer terminal.

The juxtaposition of the two articles intrigued him. "Dare we mention them

## MEDIA CIRCUS

The Trouble with America's Newspapers



**HOWARD KURTZ**

PRESS CRITIC FOR THE WASHINGTON POST

in the same breath?" he typed. "To do so might be considered deplorably insensitive, perhaps raising the specter of eugenics."

Kimelman pressed on. While no one should be forced to use Norplant, perhaps "welfare mothers" could be offered "incentives" to do so. At the very least, the contraceptive "should be made

available for free to poor women."

"All right, the subject makes us uncomfortable, too," he concluded. "But we're made even more uncomfortable by the impoverishment of black America and its effect on the nation's future. Think about it."

People in The Inquirer newsroom didn't need to think about it very long. When the editorial—"Poverty and Norplant: Can Contraception Reduce the Underclass?"—appeared the next day, it sparked a furor that shook the newspaper to its foundations.

If communities are often upset at the way the press handles racial issues, the backlash can be equally strong in the newsroom itself. All the nagging questions about bias, favoritism and negative stereotypes resonate with special force in offices that are dedicated to something resembling the daily pursuit of truth.

It is easy to underestimate the importance of a newspaper's internal culture to the gathering, writing and processing of news. If the dominant world view is white and middle-class, that shapes the way a Central Park jogger story might be framed, or a Bensonhurst racial murder, or any story touching on race.

When black journalists are a significant force on a newspaper, that tends to broaden the approach to news, while also producing clashes over what is

acceptable in covering the black community. Some blacks contend that their newspapers have sensationalized allegations involving black public officials and depicted minority neighborhoods as populated mainly by criminals and low-lives. Such arguments form the invisible backdrop for much of what readers see in the paper on racial subjects.

In the space of two years, the major newspapers in Philadelphia, Boston and Washington, all of them liberal voices, found themselves torn by bruising racial controversies. In each case black and white staffers viewed the same events through a very different lens.

Newspapers have devoted millions of column inches to the emotional debate over affirmative action programs, which have drawn strong support from liberal editorial pages. What has gone largely unreported, however, is the growing white resentment toward such programs at the newspapers themselves, where some staffers see them as rigid quotas. This sort of backlash might be deemed politically incorrect on the op-ed pages, but it may more accurately reflect the racial strains in American society than much of what appears in print.

Twenty years ago, newspapers were largely white, middle-class bastions. A concerted push to hire more minorities began in earnest in the late 70's, complete with numerical goals, special internships and the other paraphernalia of affirmative action. These laudable efforts have produced more diverse newsrooms, which in turn have demanded more sensitivity to the problems of a multi-layered culture.

Yet this very diversity has stoked internal tensions and contributed to racial resentment. These feelings were muted during the boom years of the 80's, when there always seemed to be enough jobs to go around. But in the early 90's, as the recession put the newspaper business into a deep freeze, jobs became scarce. Competition for each new vacancy or promotion was intense. Journalists found themselves fighting over slivers of a shrinking pie.

"In tough economic times, race comes into play," says Peggy Hernandez, until recently a Hispanic reporter at

The Boston Globe. "We thought we were immune. We thought we were above it. And we weren't. Suddenly it dawned on us that there were some people who looked at us as minorities first."

A respected Washington journalist with 30 years' experience told me how he had shopped his resume at some of the country's top newspapers, only to be told they had no openings for a white man. One paper said it had used up its quota by hiring a few white sports-writers. "The hypocrisy in this business is unbelievable," the reporter said. "They all write editorials opposing quotas, and every one of them has a quota. The fact that you're a middle-aged white man is death."

These internal frictions, mirrored by a new sensitivity to community reaction, have set the parameters on how far newspapers can go in covering race-related stories. In some ways that can be positive. Few newspapers today would run a front-page headline dripping with racial innuendo—"Marauders From Inner City Prey on L.A.'s Suburbs"—as The Los Angeles Times did in 1981. But there is a chilling effect as well. Even the bravest journalists have learned in recent years that race and strong opinions are an explosive mixture. In an era when a few ill-chosen words can touch off an organized boycott by some offended faction, even a little bit of candor can be dangerous. The result is a new skittishness in the press, a powerful urge to skirt sensitive subjects and airbrush the ugliest realities.

If plenty of readers find newspapers too bland for their taste, it is in part because so many Norplant-like matters have been declared off-limits, fit for private whispers but not for publication. Editors have learned to walk on eggshells, often buying themselves protective cover by assigning black reporters to inner-city beats.

They are, in a sense, under siege. Some black politicians are all too willing to cry racism when white-owned news organizations dig up the kind of dirt they have been printing about white officeholders for decades. White reporters are easily stung by such rhetoric.

And black journalists who report aggressively on the black community are equally vulnerable to the charge that they are gutless Uncle Toms betraying their brethren.

"I think there are issues the media just can't discuss," says Richard Cohen, The Washington Post columnist, who has been the target of black protests. "No one knows how to deal with charges that you're a racist, that you're an anti-Semite. It's easier not to do these stories than to do the stories and face the consequences."

To be sure, there are times when racial violence forces the press to look such issues squarely in the eye. But more often race is dealt with in superficial ways—the government report on housing discrimination, the hearing on affirmative action. Privately, many reporters say that black politicians are often held to a lesser standard because white newspapers, in an unconscious form of racism, feel the need to bend way over backwards.

Touchiness about race is hardly a new phenomenon. In 1965, when Daniel Patrick Moynihan issued his report on the breakdown of the black family, 26 percent of nonwhite children were born out of wedlock. The uproar that greeted Moynihan's findings chilled discussion of the issue for a generation. Now the out-of-wedlock figure for minorities is 61 percent, and we still have trouble talking about it.

The silence is more ominous in the 90's because the stakes are so much higher. The seemingly intractable culture of poverty has inflicted on society problems ranging from crack babies to teenage drug dealers blowing each other away with semiautomatic weapons. Yet even sympathetic liberals who dare raise the question of personal responsibility for such behavior are assailed for blame-the-victim views.

During New York's 1989 mayoral campaign, says Newsweek writer Joe Klein, "I would ask, 'How do we as a society address the 15-year-old mother on welfare? What do we owe her, and what does she owe us?' That was generally seen as a racist question. I was once hissed at the 92nd Street Y when I asked this at a mayoral forum."

In his five years as a New York magazine columnist, Klein wrote about "the core issues that are never discussed: the disintegration of the black family and the growth of a violent, anarchic, alienated, welfare-dependent underclass over the past quarter-century. This is the pathology at the heart of the city's agony."

Newspapers tend to shy away from such gut-wrenching stuff because they are worried—too worried, perhaps—about offending readers. Increasingly, local papers are filled with such yuppie subjects as day care, traffic, the Mommy track, home-equity loans and personal computers. The mere mention of race raises a red flag that sets editors on edge.

When a 1991 fire at a chicken-processing plant in North Carolina killed 25 people, virtually all of them black, editors at The Washington Post deleted the racial identification from a story by Paul Taylor. There was concern that the focus on race would seem gratuitous in such a tragedy. But the relevance was beyond dispute: As Taylor pointed out in a follow-up story, it was poor black women who took these low-wage jobs in the rural South, and therefore were most likely to be killed when white owners locked the doors to an unsafe factory.

In 1989, a Post editor asked me to write about the apparent belief among some blacks that drug abuse, and even AIDS, are the result of a deliberate white conspiracy to destroy the black community. The idea, espoused by the likes of the Reverend Louis Farrakhan, seemed so ludicrous on its face that it was hard for me to take it seriously. But as I interviewed blacks from different walks of life, I was struck by how many found credence in such theories, or at least believed that white authorities had acted with criminal indifference in allowing the drug scourge to devastate black America. I noted that of course there was "no concrete evidence" for such conspiracies; it was a question of what people persisted in believing, rational or not.

The Washington Monthly attacked my story as "bizarre." "Not one fact about the conspiracy—not even the

name of a single conspirator—is revealed in the story," Scott Shuger wrote. "This is news?" Shuger complained that I had no polling data to back up my findings, as if simply interviewing people was far too unscientific. The following year, a New York Times/CBS poll found that 25 percent of blacks believe that the government "deliberately makes sure that drugs are easily available in poor black neighborhoods." Another 35 percent said this was possibly true.

Daring to mention the unmentionable is even riskier for black journalists, whose role is misunderstood by many in the black community. To be sure, black writers are acutely aware of their heritage. If not for a generation of protests and sit-ins, most of them would not have jobs in white-owned news organizations.

At the same time, the best black journalists believe that their role is to tell it like it is, not to gloss over the problems of the ghettos or serve as propagandists for whichever black leader is popular at the moment. After all, no one expects all Jewish journalists to have identical views on Israel, or all Hispanic journalists to embrace Hispanic candidates. Yet black reporters who take controversial stands are often assailed as traitors.

One such target is Juan Williams, a Washington Post reporter whose heresies include disparaging Spike Lee's movies and criticizing Jesse Jackson. Williams has built a national reputation by zigging when other blacks are zagging, an approach that has also boosted his career as a television commentator.

"Nothing wears more on my soul than people who criticize me as a writer not so much for the content of what I wrote, but for the fact that I'm willing to challenge and debate some decree from a black leader," Williams told me. "There's a whole notion that to really be a black person, you have to have certain political views, otherwise you're 'not really black.' There's a tremendous instinct toward censorship. That's what it boils down to. It's very dangerous. It's limiting, both intellectually and politically. It invites demagoguery."

Williams says he is tired of hearing "that the reason you're making the case is to please your white masters. That

you have no integrity. That you are a captive of white America. There's simply a reluctance to understand that black people can have different opinions.

"I don't like being the bad guy," he says. "I don't like getting beat up constantly. The easy way to be the good guy is to say certain things. That's a high price to pay."

A few days after the Norplant editorial appeared, dozens of Inquirer staff members, black and white, vented their rage at an emotional meeting with Don Kimelman and David Boldt. Garry Howard, a black sports editor and one of six kids raised by a welfare mother in a South Bronx project, said the thrust of the editorial was "that I shouldn't have been born." Chuck Stone, a veteran black columnist for The Philadelphia Daily News, accused Kimelman of "Nordic arrogance" and said that "Hitler could have written the same editorial." A fringe group with ties to Lyndon LaRouche demonstrated outside the newspaper, handing out flyers that said, "Inquirer Pushes Nazi Eugenics...to REDUCE THE NUMBER OF BLACK CHILDREN THAT ARE BORN!"

Black reporters circulated a petition calling for Boldt's removal as editorial page editor. The paper's top Metro columnist, Steve Lopez, wrote a piece likening Kimelman and Boldt to David Duke, the former Ku Klux Klansman. "What we have, basically," Lopez wrote, "is The Inquirer brain trust looking down from its ivory tower and wondering if black people should be paid to stop having so many damn kids."

"I feel bad about it," Kimelman told me the day after the Lopez column appeared. "Certain things as a white man you just don't see. I still believe what I wrote, but..." His voice trailed off. "I felt very bad that every single black reporter and editor I know, from the most radical to the most reasonable, hated this editorial."

That Saturday, Don Kimelman walked into David Boldt's office. He hadn't been able to sleep for two nights. Kimelman had already posted an apology on the office bulletin board, but he was worried that the staff Christmas

party at his home would be ruined. He was weighing a public apology on the editorial page.

It would be an extraordinary reversal, and not one that Kimelman suggested lightly, for both he and Boldt believed there was nothing duller than mushy, conventional-wisdom editorials. But the Norplant editorial seemed "to have touched some exposed nerve," as Boldt put it.

Boldt had been "shell-shocked" by the "McCarthyite tone" of the staff meeting, at which some of his old writings had been read back to him in an accusatory tone. He suggested that they wait until things calmed down. Kimelman disagreed.

"I still think we were right," Boldt says of the editorial. "Dancing in the back of my mind was the thought that if we apologize, it would become an even bigger story...The mob howling at the door may possibly have had a peripheral effect on our deliberations."

Kimelman's apologia was turned over to a black editorial writer, Lorraine Branham, for editing. She strengthened the piece, making it more "abject" and "groveling," Boldt says. It ran two days before Christmas.

The *Inquirer* received hundreds of letters, far more than the original editorial had generated. Most letter-writers were appalled that the *Inquirer*, having dared to advance the notion that poor people shouldn't have so many children, had backed down from a courageous stance. One writer called the paper's staff "spineless scum." There was a buzz among some staffers that The *Inquirer* had caved in to the left-liberal "thought police."

"There were a lot of readers who were angry about that apology—basically white readers, not black readers," Don Kimelman recalls. "It keeps getting played back to us: 'You backed down to blacks. You don't back down to anyone else. When the blacks complain you apologize.'"

The three black editorial board members saw the matter in a different light. Their views on race and poverty had long been ignored, they said, and one of them, Claude Lewis, had stopped attending meetings in protest. Another

black member, Acel Moore, had complained before the editorial ran that Kimelman was turning Norplant into "a race thing," but Kimelman made only minor wording changes in response.

"When the right loses, then they charge that it's the thought police," Moore says. "I just don't see it." Had blacks been more fully consulted about the Norplant piece, he says, "It wouldn't have been as snide and as insulting."

Oddly enough, Kimelman had written about Norplant a few weeks earlier. His first editorial urged that Norplant be promoted for "impoverished, unmarried young women" who were having "too many babies." No one noticed. It was only when he mentioned race that the issue exploded.

"Whenever they talk about the urban poor or the inner-city poor, it just gets painted all black," says Vanessa Williams, a black reporter. "You come away with a feeling, 'If only we could do something about those black people.'"

Don Kimelman did not shrink when colleagues compared him to David Duke. "Does this make me ashamed?" he asked in an internal memo. "No. It helps explain to me why David Duke, in his post-Klan incarnation, is getting so many votes. He talks publicly about stuff that the rest of us only reserve for our private conversations."

After the apology, Boldt worried that the editorial board would become excessively cautious. "Every pressure on me is pulling me in that direction," Boldt says. "No one will punish me if I become bland and boring."

New rules were established. Any controversial editorial had to be fully discussed in advance by the full 13-member board; a majority vote would no longer suffice. On racial issues, Kimelman says, "The three black members of the board have what amounts to an effective veto. There's been a shying away from certain subjects where we know there's going to be a knock-down, drag-out fight."

The black journalists can hardly be blamed for pressing their point of view, any more than one would fault the white liberals who denounced the Norplant editorial as racist. But the inevitable result of such a polarized atmo-

sphere is for everyone concerned to tip-toe around explosive subjects, hoping to avoid stepping on another land mine. And that is a sure-fire prescription for more of the tasteless mush that plagues so many editorial pages.

The Boston Globe newsroom has always been somewhat stratified, like the city it covers. At its core the paper was a pillar of the WASP establishment, "journalism's equivalent of the Mayflower," as Mike Barnicle put it. There was the august Taylor family, who owned the place, and other Brahmins like former editor Thomas Winship and Metro editor Ben Bradlee Jr. There was the sizable Irish contingent, led by editor Jack Driscoll, Barnicle, and countless others. There was a minority caucus, a Jewish caucus, a women's caucus. "The fucking place is like Beirut," says one Boston journalist.

Women often felt shunted aside on a paper whose stars tended to be men who spoke the locker-room language of politics and sports. There were complaints that Bradlee, the editor with the famous name, was "running a macho newsroom," as reporter Muriel Cohen put it. Bradlee said he was simply trying to shake things up and create a meritocracy, but the women were upset that Bradlee and the guys were leaving the office two afternoons a week to play basketball. The women believed that juicy assignments were being awarded on the court.

Tempers grew particularly short in the fall of 1991 because the union contract had expired a year earlier and almost no one had gotten a raise. There had been some grumbling a year earlier when a black business reporter, who was being lured by The Washington Post, got a raise and a transfer to the prestigious state house beat. Now another black reporter, Renee Graham, had gotten a big raise and a transfer to the Living/Arts section after being courted by The New York Times. Graham was not universally admired by her colleagues, and some white staffers saw the move as an outrage. Almost no one in the newspaper business was hiring,

but somehow black journalists kept getting lucrative offers from other papers trying to meet their hiring targets.

"The middle-sized papers rob the little ones and The New York Times and Washington Post rob everyone else," says Frank Grundstrom, a Globe vice president.

In a larger sense, the strains of 15 years of affirmative action were starting to show. A generation of white reporters had grown weary of being told in interviews that they could not even be considered because the next slot had to go to a minority. At the same time, many black reporters regarded the pace of integration as pathetically inadequate. No matter how hard they worked, they saw the best assignments and promotions being handed to white colleagues in what looked very much like a good-old-boy network.

Most major newspapers had special personnel directors whose job was to roam the country in search of minority journalists. Nearly everyone was playing the numbers game. At the Times, the goal was to hire one minority reporter for each new white hire. At The Post, editors set a target that one of every four hires be a minority. At The Globe, which had signed an affirmative action pact with the city's minority community in the early 1980's, the hiring goal was also 25 percent.

The sniping over Renee Graham's raise would never have reached the outside world had it not been for a fateful fax. One white staffer faxed word of the controversy to Boston Herald columnist Howie Carr, who never tired of ridiculing the "bow-tied bumkissers" at "El Globo." Carr wrote that Globe staffers were "up in arms" and "disgusted" about Graham's raise. "Her byline appears about as often as Halley's Comet," he quoted "one ink-stained wretch" as saying. Another staffer told Carr, "If she were white, would they have made this effort to keep her?"

Carr somehow failed to mention that The Herald did not have a single black news reporter at the time. It was an appalling situation for a big-city paper, but Carr would not let such petty details spoil his fun.

Minority reporters at The Globe were furious at the leak. They circulated an open letter signed by 48 staffers. "We won't stand for this kind of racism," it said. "To inject race into this in such a vengeful way is reprehensible." The staffers said the anonymous criticism "mirrors the kind of bigotry that propelled David Duke's campaign in Louisiana."

The Globe's response was somewhat curious for a newspaper that depends on daily leaks. Management officials started checking the phone logs at each fax machine in an effort to nab the mystery leaker. As the fax police closed in, Peter Howe, a Harvard graduate and scion of a wealthy WASP family, confessed to being Carr's source.

In a letter to his colleagues, Howe, a state house reporter, apologized to Renee Graham "for the enormous grief I have helped cause her." But he also assailed the paper for conducting "a witch hunt," calling it "a move straight out of the Nixon White House." Howe said he was no racist, but believed that "hard work" and "performance" should be rewarded. The Globe, he said, must "be forced to confront the issue of an alleged double standard."

Renee Graham refused to accept Howe's apology, calling his letter "smug" and "rife with arrogance." She said that "in some ways I don't think we'll ever heal... This was the worst racial incident of my life, second to none."

Globe officials noted that white reporters had also gotten raises by using job offers as leverage. But in a meeting with the staff, Jack Driscoll admitted he had erred by not denouncing the leak to Carr at the outset. He suspended Peter Howe for two weeks without pay, further angering some white staffers.

"The Globe's management is kowtowing to what is essentially a special-interest group and placating them by going on this hunt, much like the CIA would," a top white reporter said. "If they want to keep her because she's black and they need to keep black reporters, fine. But they should say that."

Minority staffers, however, thought Howe got off lightly. "For me, race was the issue," said reporter Peggy Hernandez. "This was just intolerable. We got slapped in the face."

It is a measure of the raw feelings about race that a single raise could produce such a maelstrom of emotion. But it was hardly unique. The Inquirer had experienced much the same sort of eruption earlier in the year.

A few weeks after the Norplant flap died down, The Inquirer unveiled its new "pluralism" program. A pluralism committee, required for all Knight-Ridder newspapers, had begun its work under Gene Roberts, the brilliant editor who had transformed The Inquirer from a second-rate rag into a nationally respected newspaper. Now it fell to Maxwell King, who had recently succeeded Roberts as editor, to explain the new policy to the staff.

Fifty percent of all new hires would be minorities, King said, and 50 percent would be women. The numerical targets—King did not shy away from the word "quotas"—would remain in place for five years. The paper would also launch such initiatives as "sensitivity" seminars on racial and ethnic matters.

The staff meeting quickly turned contentious. A number of white reporters declared that The Inquirer newsroom had always been a meritocracy. It was a place where a reporter could be covering the Bucks County school board one year and, by dint of talent and enterprise and long hours, find himself in New Delhi the next. "I got where I am through hard work," said health reporter Gilbert Gaul. "I worked at a lot of small newspapers before I was able to get to this level. Some of this gets lost in the otherwise admirable goal of trying to make newsrooms more diverse."

Ralph Cipriano, a copy editor, expressed his views in a memo, identifying himself as "one of those white guys people are complaining about." He said he felt angry about being "stereotyped" and resented the suggestion that "we white males are all identical slices from the same loaf of Wonder Bread."

White folks were teed off, to put it mildly. But many black staffers were equally passionate in their belief that an aggressive hiring plan was long overdue. "We've always had quotas in America," Claude Lewis said. "It's just that the quotas were 95 or 96 percent in favor of whites." He also bristled at talk

that the policy might lead to the hiring of unqualified blacks. "We never hear the word qualified when we talk about whites," he said. "It's only brought into the discussion when we talk about blacks...There's an assumption that whites are qualified."

The divisions cut across racial lines. Some blacks were flatly opposed to quotas. Other viewed affirmative action as "a double-edged sword," as business reporter Glenn Burkins put it, a policy that stigmatized those it purposed to help by stamping them as second-class citizens. At the same time, many whites thought *The Inquirer* plan put too little emphasis on journalistic merit. "We recently hired a Vietnam veteran," a senior editor said. "He's a very different white man than I am in terms of background. But he doesn't represent diversity, whereas if we hired Bryant Gumbel's younger brother, it would be diversity."

Inquirer management insisted the issue was being exaggerated by a handful of critics. The idea, King and other editors said, was simply to be more aggressive in diversifying a staff that was one-third women and 13 percent minority—a particularly important goal in a city that is 40 percent black. "It was never regarded as a quota that would be met come hell or high water," said Managing Editor James Naughton. "The standards will not change."

Anger over the quota issue continues to flare in many newsrooms. At *USA Today*, some harmless banter in an internal computer newsletter turned ugly in 1992 when automotive writer James Healey said that perhaps the paper should hire David Duke as an editor to counter "our eagerness to make quotas more important than merit...White men have rights, too." This prompted a torrent of messages from furious staffers, including reporter Blair Walker: "Call me an overly sensitive black man who sees bigotry lurking behind every bush, but a proposal that we name an avowed racist and Nazi sympathizer as our next DME [deputy managing editor] doesn't strike me as humorous, not even a little bit."

One problem for big-city papers is that most of their openings are in the suburbs, where they are chasing upscale readers and advertising dollars. Some black reporters have little interest in covering white-bread suburbia, and editors tend to deploy their best black staffers on inner-city beats. This can be a form of ghettoization, confining black reporters to "black" stories.

Still, it seems clear that minority reporters can unlock doors that remain closed to white journalists, who are often viewed with suspicion or hostility in slum neighborhoods. At *The Washington Post*, for example, Athelia Knight penetrated the subculture of Lorton prison in Virginia by riding on vans that ferried black women to visits with their imprisoned husbands and boyfriends. Knight wrote a compelling series about drug smuggling at the prison. Leon Dash, another black *Post* reporter, wrote movingly about teenage pregnancy after moving into an impoverished neighborhood for several months. By contrast, when frustrated Hispanics sparked a riot in the Mount Pleasant section of Washington in 1991, the *Metro* staff was hampered by the fact that it had only four Hispanic reporters.

Minorities are woefully underrepresented in the senior management ranks of most newspapers. Until *The New York Times* promoted Gerald Boyd to metropolitan editor in 1991, the paper had never had a black in charge of any news desk, and earlier this year the *Times* finally hired a black columnist, Bob Herbert for its op-ed page. The *Los Angeles Times* "is still an overwhelmingly white institution, especially at the upper levels," says David Shaw, the paper's media critic. The editor, managing editor, senior editor, national editor, foreign editor, metro editor, city editor and business editor are all white males.

Minority staffers often serve their papers as internal ombudsmen, puncturing stereotypes and suggesting story angles that might not occur to middle-class whites. Yet there are still too many papers with no black or Hispanic columnists, art critics, foreign correspon-

dents or senior editors. The industry's record is improving, but not nearly fast enough.

While most newspapers are fixated on hiring percentages, they pay far less attention to developing minority talents once the reporters are on board. Many black and Hispanic reporters get frustrated and jump to other papers. Rather than expanding the pool of talent, editors spend too much time chasing after the same small group of experienced black reporters, who are constantly romanced with promises of better pay and assignments. This merry-go-round is a game that inflates the market value of mediocre reporters and causes whispers about the better ones.

When Gwen Ifill was the only black reporter at *The Boston Herald* in the late 70's, someone left her a note that said "Nigger go home." But the talented Ifill accumulated enough experience to move to *The Baltimore Sun*. Four years later she was hired away by *The Washington Post*, where she became a national political reporter, and in 1991 she joined *The New York Times*.

"Big newspapers aren't interested in training young black reporters," Ifill says. "They're interested in raiding...Frequently, newspapers are so proud of themselves for having recruited black people that they don't take the necessary effort to see that they succeed once they get there."

Ifill recalls one editor who took a yellow pad and listed every black reporter who had left the paper. "He proceeded to explain how each one of these people was inadequate and how each one couldn't cut it," she says. "It was one of the most insulting exchanges I've ever had."

Expectations have become an important factor in keeping talented blacks. Michel McQueen spent several years as a Maryland reporter for *The Washington Post*. But when the paper failed to promote her as rapidly as she had hoped, she moved to *The Wall Street Journal*, which made her a White House correspondent, and she recently moved to ABC News. At times, McQueen says, "You feel like your ideas aren't respected. I remember an editor asking if I felt I could be objective covering

black people. No one asked that question of white reporters. I was very hurt by that."

In the end, it takes more than a set of affirmative-action numbers to build and maintain a diversified news staff. The Seattle Times has quadrupled its minority representation from 4 percent to 18 percent—without numerical goals—through aggressive recruiting, scholarships, urban workshops and mentor programs.

Alex McCloud, The Times managing editor, says the use of quotas "carries too many negatives. If you say we're going to hire a minority for this job, it tends to categorize the job as a minority job."

A moment later, however, McCloud admitted that when he needed an assistant managing editor for news, "I made it real clear that my highest goal was to find a person of color for that job." He hired Carol Carmichael, a black woman from The Inquirer. "I thought it was so important to the organization that it have a minority at that level," McCloud says.

Once The Philadelphia Inquirer contracted a case of the racial jitters, no part of the paper was safe. Not even that fortress of literary freedom, the book review.

In the spring of 1991, Art Carey, a writer for the paper's Sunday magazine, was asked to review *Illiberal Education*, Dinesh D'Souza's polemical assault against affirmative action and multicultural programs on college campuses. Carey's views on the subject were hardly a secret. He had been a prominent critic of The Inquirer's pluralism plan, publicly assailing the sensitivity seminars as "a reeducation camp" and "a form of thought control and ideological totalitarianism" by "the Sensitivity Gestapo." He was also finishing his own book on the scourge of political correctness. Still, The Inquirer's book editor, Mike Leary, was surprised at the vehemence of Carey's review.

"The 'victims' are, narrowly, blacks and women," Carey wrote, "and, more broadly, just about anybody with a claim to having been oppressed or exploited—that is, just about anybody with a gripe

other than white males, who, as we all know, are totally responsible for all the world's woes." He even worked in a familiar dig, saying that political correctness was "enforced by a prissy, morally smug Sensitivity Gestapo composed of the pathologically humorless and chronically malcontent."

Other editors raised objections, and Leary took the piece to Max King. King asked that a second review, taking the opposite view, be ordered up to run alongside the Carey review. Carey's piece was held while a suitable liberal was located.

The basic concept of an independent book review, of course, is that the newspaper defers to the reviewer's judgment, right or wrong. But The Inquirer, undoubtedly anticipating a Norplant-like protest, put its thumb on the scales. Leary assigned the second review to Fasaha Traylor of the William Penn Foundation, who, as expected, dismissed D'Souza as "a militant conservative" whose "language is calculated to incite, not solve."

Leary insisted the paper was not trying to enforce any ideological line. "I don't think anybody is going to stifle a strong opinion," he said. "We're just going to have more than one." The twin reviews ran side by side, a study in political symmetry.

Carey, naturally, was upset. "This is an example of what the book is about," he says. "This book endorses a view that is at odds with the left-liberal orthodoxy of this newspaper. It seems to me a decision has been made not to suppress it, but to muffle it or alloy it by running a counter-review. It seems to me a double standard is at work here."

In the predawn darkness on January 22, 1990, two black Washington Post reporters were staked out in front of the Southeast Washington home of Marion Barry, mayor of the District of Columbia and accused cocaine user. It was three days after Barry had been busted in an FBI sting for smoking crack at the Vista International Hotel, and The Post was keeping a 24-hour watch on the mayor in case he happened to make news.

Barry was scheduled to speak at a church near his home that Sunday morning. Shortly before Barry emerged, Steve Twomey, an ace feature writer recently hired from The San Jose Mercury-News, arrived on the scene to write the main color story about Barry's day. Twomey, who is white, had been given the assignment by the city editor, who was also white. Jill Nelson, one of the black reporters, called Phillip Dixon, a black assistant city editor, at home to complain.

"What is this shit?" Dixon recalls Nelson saying. "How come we're doing all the slave labor and when the story gets good, the great white hopes come in and take the story?"

If the lengthy investigation, arrest and trial of Marion Barry divided the city of Washington along racial lines, nowhere were the tensions more visible than in The Washington Post newsroom. The paper had been trying for years to verify the rumors that Barry was using drugs, and there had been stormy arguments about what could be published and whether The Post was holding a black mayor to a lesser standard.

For journalists, the Barry case was like a racial Rorschach test—some saw a crooked, coked-up pol finally getting his comeuppance, while others saw an up-from-the-streets black leader being harassed by white authorities. Like the Norplant editorial or the uproar over Renee Graham's raise, Barry's arrest was the galvanizing event that deepened the racial fault lines at The Post, dividing black journalists from each other as well as from whites.

For a white-owned newspaper in a city that is two-thirds black, there is no more sensitive task than covering a confrontational black mayor. The natural tension that develops between aggressive reporters and city hall can turn ugly when a black official is the target. Suddenly, black readers tend to see any press criticism as racially motivated, to dismiss corruption headlines as part of a white conspiracy.

These feelings were particularly acute in Washington, which had long been ruled by arrogant southern congressmen before District residents were finally granted the right of self-govern-



ment. Barry kept the pot boiling with his patented us-against-them tactics, accusing the white media of joining an effort to "lynch" him and speaking exclusively to black newspapers at key intervals in the case. "It was a drama in this town that was just laced throughout with race," says Milton Coleman, the assistant managing editor for local news and the senior black editor at The Post. "It was impossible for those diverging racial views not to be played out in the newsroom."

The Post had a complicated relationship with Marion Barry, who came to prominence as a dashiki-clad activist during the civil rights struggles of the '60s. The paper essentially made Barry the city's second elected mayor by endorsing him in a tight three-way race in 1978, embracing him as the best hope for reviving a paralyzed bureaucracy. The Post supported Barry for reelection in 1982 and again in 1986, and he won easily with strong black support. By his third campaign, however, nearly all Barry's white support had vanished as his administration became a cesspool of corruption and he was dogged by allegations of cocaine use and philandering. While The Post aggressively reported many of these stories, there was a feeling in the newsroom that no white mayor with such a shabby record would have won the paper's endorsement three times. Juan Williams, who spent time on the editorial page, said the paper's view was "that black politics were in their infancy and it would be unfair to hold them to the same standard."

Williams says The Post was not receptive when he wrote stories that criticized Barry or blamed him for decaying city services. "They didn't want to hear that shit," he says. "I just kept getting the red-light signal. People at the paper started saying, 'Hey Juan, you're going too hard on this guy.' I was being rapidly isolated. I was tainted material. Instead of reading what the fuck I was writing, they would say, 'You know Juan. He's always complaining about Barry.'"

Williams grew so disgusted that in 1986 he wrote a piece for The Washington Monthly called "A Black Mayor Be-

trays the Faith." Williams felt he could not say what needed to be said about Barry in his own newspaper. The Post, he said, had "a strong sense of defensiveness and liberal guilt that came with being a white newspaper in a black town."

The Washington Post had a history of paternalism toward the black community. In 1949, it agreed to suppress news of a race riot in exchange for a promise by authorities to integrate the city's swimming pools. During the 60's the paper often played down what were called "near misses," or racial incidents that might spark violence. When the 1968 riots broke out, there was a shouting match in the newsroom over whether to run an inflammatory picture of three white merchants with shotguns, guarding their store against black looters. Ben Bradlee made sure the photo ran on page one. The Post finally won its long crusade for home rule in 1975, when a locally elected black government took power for the first time.

Then came the "Jimmy" story. In 1980, when The Post published Janet Cooke's piece about an 8-year-old heroin addict, many people were outraged that a reporter would watch a young boy shoot up and do nothing to help him. The police chief ordered a citywide search for Jimmy. Milton Coleman, who was The Post's city editor, assembled an 11-person reporting team to follow the case. But Mayor Barry insisted the story simply wasn't plausible. Long after the piece was exposed as a hoax and The Post had returned Cooke's Pulitzer Prize, many blacks would remember the paper's insistence that "Jimmy" was real.

In the spring of 1984, Milton Coleman and The Post were in the news again. Coleman reported that Jesse Jackson had referred to Jews as "Hymie" and New York City as "Hymietown" in private conversations with reporters. Jackson, who was running for president, had used the ethnic slurs after telling Coleman, "Let's talk black talk." This was Jackson's lingo for talking on "background," which generally means the information can be used without attribution. Coleman passed the "Hymie"

story to another Post reporter—it appeared in the 37th and 38th paragraphs of a long article—after confirming that Jackson had used the language with other reporters. It caused a huge uproar, and many blacks denounced Coleman as a traitor. Louis Farrakhan made threats against Coleman's life.

The question, Coleman wrote later, was: "Are you black first or are you a reporter first? Which side are you on?" Coleman's answer was that whatever racial kinship he might feel with Jackson, his first duty was as a journalist.

The two incidents would haunt Coleman for years. "For the rest of my life," he says, "I will always be known as Milton Coleman, comma, who was Janet Cooke's editor and who betrayed Jesse Jackson."

In the fall of 1986, The Post found itself in the eye of another racial storm. In a column for the Sunday magazine, Richard Cohen wrote about white merchants who bar young blacks from their stores because they see the blacks as potential shoplifters:

"I'm with the store owners, although I was not at first...White assailants are rather hard to find in urban America. Especially in cities like Washington and New York, the menace comes from young black males. Both blacks and whites believe those young black males are the ones most likely to bop them over the head...We are all wary of behavior that would bring a charge of racism. But the mere recognition of race as a factor—especially if those of the same race recognize the same factor—is not in itself racism."

The column seemed more an exploration of racial fears than redneck-style racism. But Washington's black community exploded in outrage. Cohen had the misfortune to write the column for the first issue of The Post's redesigned Sunday magazine, which had been heavily promoted. The cover story was a profile of black New York rap singer Joseph (Just Ice) Williams, who had been charged with the murder of a Washington drug dealer. The dual selections, approved by white editors, were obviously less than sensitive in a majority black city. "It is difficult to explain why it didn't hit me over the

head like a pipe at the time," said Leonard Downie Jr., then the paper's managing editor.

Some black leaders formed The Washington Post Recall Committee, which held regular Sunday demonstrations at the paper to protest the way blacks were depicted in *The Post*. Despite a written apology by executive editor Ben Bradlee, more than 250,000 copies of the magazine were dumped on *The Post*'s front steps over the next three months. The protests ended when the publisher, Donald Graham, agreed to appear regularly on a black radio talk show hosted by Cathy Hughes, a leader of the recall committee.

"I felt besieged," Cohen says. "I was the target of a campaign...It was an emotional reaction in which the people who screamed and yelled the loudest became the spokesmen. It is, in the end, intimidation."

Soon afterward, during a two-week period, *The Post* ran five upbeat stories about blacks on the front of the Style section, including pieces on local families gathering to watch the *Cosby* Show, actress Esther Rolle and the National Council of Negro Women honoring Dorothy Height. Some white staffers believed the paper was trying too hard to appease the black community.

"The problem with the paper is there aren't enough people there who know black people as ordinary human beings, who know what their interests are, what their culture is, what their lifestyle is," says Tom Sherwood, a former *Post* reporter now with WRC-TV. "The paper gets so wrapped up in, 'Are we going to be sensitive?' that they get discombobulated. The paper is very uncomfortable when dealing with racial issues."

If *Post* reporters could not prove that Marion Barry was doing dope, it was not for lack of trying. They searched for him when he vanished on mysterious "vacations." They flew to Caribbean islands where the mayor was said to have snorted coke. Reporter Michael York even had a source in Barry's car who kept a *Post* cellular phone hidden in his

bag, calling York whenever the mayor went somewhere so the paper could track his movements.

Several stories produced clashes with Milton Coleman, a strong-willed man whose soft voice and easy-going manner belied a stubborn streak. Coleman would insist on more evidence or would tone down the writing. Tom Sherwood once took his name off a story about a city contract involving a Barry crony. "I announced in a loud voice, 'Milton, you're not editing that story, you're gutting it!'"

Such clashes led to an emotional staff meeting at which reporters complained that Coleman was watering down controversial stories. Coleman recalls observing that everyone else at the conference table was white.

It was not difficult to believe that Coleman was sympathetic to Barry. He had covered Barry as a reporter and had encouraged the mayor to move to his predominantly black neighborhood in Southeast Washington. Coleman knew many Barry administration figures from the black student movement and saw the mayor as a much more complex figure than the way he was portrayed in *The Post*—in his words, as "an arrogant, probable drug addict running an incompetent bureaucracy."

"I felt that some of the reporting I was looking at was not sharp enough," Coleman says. "I thought our threshold for what could get in the paper was too low. A number of those stories had to do with blacks and the Barry crowd and contracting. My raising of those questions was taken as my being soft on a story. Then this racial element comes in: 'Are you saying that because you don't want a hard story on blacks?' ...It's harder for me to make a point because of my race."

Some white staffers thought Coleman's concerns were well-founded. "Milton set a high standard for these stories," Michael York says. "He didn't want circumstantial-evidence stories. There had been rumors about Barry doing drugs forever. I thought we hurt our own credibility if we ran stories about unnamed people saying Barry did drugs."

But a black reporter says that "Milton became the official black in the eyes of *The Washington Post*," a "gatekeeper" who had to approve every racially sensitive story. "It's a racist view: All blacks think alike."

The mayor, meanwhile, did his best to keep *The Post* on the defensive. In the fall of 1988, amid rumors that he was in a drug clinic, Barry eluded the press and retreated to a Catskill Mountains spa. He said he was tired of "abusive" and "intrusive" behavior by the media, "particularly *The Washington Post*." When he did grant an interview, it was to Dorothy Gilliam, a black *Post* columnist. Barry particularly seemed to enjoy confronting white reporters. "One time he got drunk and called me from out of state," says *Post* reporter Sharon LaFraniere. "He said, 'You'll never find two people who will tell you that I used drugs.' He was almost sort of taunting me."

The *Post*'s investigation of Barry reached a new level of intensity when police busted a friend of Barry's for cocaine use shortly after the mayor had visited his hotel room. Barry lashed out at his chief tormentor: "We love this city...and we're not going to let *The Washington Post* through innuendo, through rumors, do what they have done for the last 10 years."

While many *Post* reporters were openly disgusted by Barry's behavior, some black staffers thought the paper was going overboard. "All bets were off when it came to Marion Barry," says Phil Dixon, now *The Post*'s city editor. "The paper wasn't playing by the rules. In the minds of some of my colleagues, Marion Barry was fair game. It was open season. A lot of people in this newsroom had their minds made up that this guy was shit, a dope addict. I thought folks had crossed the line."

Even minor stories produced arguments. Dixon recalls one sarcastic piece about Barry escaping the winter cold at a conference at a Florida resort. The message was that "this stupid fucking mayor is down here again wasting our time and money and he shouldn't be here. He was socializing—isn't that what people do at these things?"

To York, however, it was "a bullshit conference of black leadership," and "I just figured he was up to no good." Besides, he had to follow Barry because there were rumors of a possible FBI sting.

By now the notion of a racial double standard was being openly discussed in the press. "Color Barry white and he would, as he should, be swiftly gone," Richard Cohen wrote.

The denouement came on January 18, 1990, when Barry went to see Rasheeda Moore, an old girlfriend, in Room 727 at the Vista, around the corner from The Post's offices. In what would become one of the most famous grainy, black-and-white scenes of the video age, an FBI camera captured Barry taking several long tokes on a crack pipe before agents burst in and arrested him.

The Post urged Barry to resign, citing "an especially hypocritical and cynical history of denying personal drug use and urging others to join in the fight against crime." Barry had finally been exposed as a drug abuser and a liar, and it was all on videotape.

But the city remained deeply divided. A poll showed that 42 percent of blacks, but only 14 percent of whites, believed prosecutors had targeted Barry for racial reasons. To many blacks the bust was blatant entrapment, using sex as the lure. The *Afro-American*, a black newspaper, urged the mayor to "hang in there," running such headlines as "Barry: Back, Brave and Better." The *Capital Spotlight*, another black paper, ran a piece called "Willie Horton and Mayor Barry," saying the prosecutors had used the same racist tactics as Bush's campaign team. Rasheeda Moore was assailed as the "bitch" who set Barry up.

Reporters, who are trained to put aside their biases when interviewing others, found this was one story where they could not. "Talking with whites was easy because I was white," Steve Twomey says. "It was so clear Barry had done wrong and should be punished. Blacks were far more torn. They knew he'd done wrong, but they'd hate to give you an inch. They knew you, a white person, would take delight in that. They would say, 'I think they're

out to get black people,' but then they would say they had been deeply disappointed by Barry. As a reporter, I was seeking logic where there was none.

"The whites tended to see this strictly as the Barry case. Blacks tended to see it as a whole series of concentric circles—the black experience, the role of the federal government, the role of this newspaper. There was a lot of black anger."

The values of objective journalism meant little in such a polarized atmosphere. Barry's allies proclaimed that the feds had spent \$42 million investigating him, and although there was nothing to back this up—the actual figure was about \$2 million—the black newspapers carried it and black leaders endlessly repeated it. Facts were irrelevant. You were either for Barry or against him.

"White people in this room, and some black people, had a hard time understanding why there was anybody in the world who could still say 'I like Marion Barry' after the arrest," Phillip Dixon says. "Marion Barry had been here a long time. He had touched a great many people. He had put a lot of people on the fucking payroll. And that meant something special that couldn't just be wished away. Rather than trying to understand it, we dismissed it as crazy."

But even Dixon was disheartened by the mayor: "When I saw him hit that pipe like an old pro, I said, this fucker is guilty."

The Barry trial proved as divisive for The Post as it was for the city. Black staffers complained that most of the paper's courtroom passes had been given to white reporters. "I didn't want to put anyone on the story purely to have a black face on the story," Coleman says. "You don't build good news machines that way."

On August 10, 1990, a jury convicted Marion Barry of one count of cocaine possession, acquitted him of a second charge and deadlocked on 12 others. White reporters saw the compromise verdict as a victory. But Black Post reporter Jill Nelson, who later quit the paper in disgust, had a different view. Her feature story the next morning spoke loudly, almost defiantly, about

the gap in perceptions. "It was a black thing at the bar at Faces last night, and other people might not understand," Nelson wrote. People at the bar were "laughing and celebrating" at "the mayor's vindication."

Time has a way of healing wounds, even among grudge-happy journalists. Don Kimelman is still turning out editorials at The Philadelphia Inquirer. Renee Graham is still writing features for The Boston Globe, and her fax-machine critic, Peter Howe, is back on the state house beat. Milton Coleman is still running the local staff at The Washington Post. And Barry, despite the paper's opposition, emerged from prison in 1992 to win a council seat in the city's poorest ward.

The racial tensions that boiled over at the three papers are still simmering beneath the surface of many American newsrooms. As newspaper staffs become more diverse, they are finally beginning to bring more sophistication to the immensely difficult challenge of covering minority communities. But they are also struggling with the frictions and resentments that inevitably accompany racial change, a behind-the-scenes drama that rarely makes the news. ■

*From "Media Circus" by Howard Kurtz  
Copyright © 1993 by Howard Kurtz.  
Reprinted by permission of Times Books,  
a division of Random House, Inc.*



*Howard Kurtz*

# Gresham's Second Law

## *Bad Journalism Imported From Britain Is Driving Out Good Journalism*

R. W. APPLE JR., Washington Bureau Chief of The New York Times, delivered the 1993 Joel Alex Morris Jr. lecture on April 8. Joel Alex Morris Jr., a 1949 graduate of Harvard, was killed in 1979 while covering the revolution in Iran for The Los Angeles Times. The lecture series was created by his family and friends to remember him and to recall and promote the standards of dedication and excellence reflected in his career as a foreign correspondent. Excerpts from the lecture are printed below.



R. W. Apple Jr.

**I**t's my conviction that the founding fathers of this country had a reason for giving journalists special privilege in the Constitution. And the reason was that we were supposed to find out and understand and explain what was going on here and abroad so that the public could understand and make an informed judgment, to form a link if you will between the governed and the governors. It was not put in the Constitution so that publishers could make billions of dollars. It was not put in the Constitution so that journalists could make millions of dollars. It was put in the Constitution so we could do serious work. My contention is that much of American journalistic resources and energy is today devoted to unserious work.

I've chosen to talk about what I call Gresham's Second Law. Gresham, who served as the treasurer to Queen Elizabeth I, observed, as extremely boring, freshman economics professors have been observing since, that bad money drives out good. Well bad journalism drives out good as well. And what we're seeing today is a tendency for the cheapest and the most meretricious form of journalism to eat the resources we need to do our job. As an old Anglophile and a 10-year resident of London, I regret to say that what is happening is that the standards and practices and values and mores of the lesser beings of Fleet Street and of Australian journalism, which is a subset of the species, are being imported to the United States.

Not only are the standards and practices and mores being imported, God help us, so are a lot of the journalists. They're everywhere. They are producing Giraldo and "Inside Edition." They

are editing for Rupert Murdoch and increasingly they are in charge of our most successful magazines. These are not the kinds of people that have made and kept papers like The Independent and The Financial Times and The Guardian at the head of the class internationally.

I can mention many things that are being imported. Suffice it to mention two. The practice of paying for stories has long been verboten in this country. It has long been widely practiced in England. The habit of quality newspapers accepting as semi-fact the product of distinctly non-quality newspapers has long been verboten in this country and practiced widely in Britain. The number one case study, of course, is Gennifer Flowers.

During 1991 the major news organizations invested a lot of talent and a lot of money in sending reporters to Little Rock to nose around to find out what we could find out about Bill Clinton. Having had a brilliant success with Gary Hart, we decided we would see what we could find out. Everybody that went to Little Rock heard about Gennifer Flowers. Nobody, I repeat nobody, on a responsible newspaper or television network, found enough to even begin to cross the threshold of reliability. There was no corroboration. It did not even come to the level of a good fight with the office. Nobody called up and said we've got this story, chief. You gotta go with it. Everybody and the chief said no, no, no, a familiar tale in newspaper offices. Everybody called up and said, it's not even close. We can't get it. If you run Gennifer Flowers and date it before January 23, 1992 through your Nexus system with the search set on omni so

everything in the system comes up, you'll find six entries. They are scattered and fleeting entries and nothing that anyone would ever have noticed. Certainly her name is not mentioned in the first paragraph of any of them. Within 48 hours, there were hundreds of stories because The Star newspaper, a super-market tabloid, which, I think, it is fair to say, the editor of no American daily had ever read, printed the story. It was picked up by one of the very best programs on television, "Nightline," almost at once. CNN then carried her press conference, and "60 Minutes" carried the rebuttal. More mainstream than that you cannot be. But it was not television alone. It was most of the daily press.

My own newspaper, in what was later derided probably correctly as a pathetic attempt at self-righteousness, carried four paragraphs unsigned from Manchester, New Hampshire. I am here tonight to give you the absolutely stunning and worthless news that I am the author of those four paragraphs. I am the author of the four paragraphs because I was running the little bureau in New Hampshire in the primary and all my reporters were going crazy and saying we can't write four paragraphs. It's the biggest story of the half-century at least. Battle of Balaklava, hell, this is it.

Interestingly enough, it was virtually unnoticed. None of the press commentary even bothered to say that The New York Times had a four-paragraph story on page 23, and The New York Times, which is always accused of setting the agenda for American news—we set the agenda to the tremendous degree that nobody paid the slightest bit of attention. Soon we were involved in this flood of stories, and we had all allowed our agenda to be set by a supermarket tabloid that specializes in stories about people with five heads.

Clinton was pounded for three weeks to a degree I've seldom seen a politician pounded. Remember Gary Hart took it for 36 hours and got in his plane and went home to Aspen. Clinton stood there and took it. It's unfair to suggest that somehow the reason for that is that Gary Hart had Aspen and Clinton had Little Rock. I think that there was very

little merit in giving this story so much attention. It surely did not, as many an editor said, give us crucial insights into the president-to-be's character except in a way that they didn't mean at all. It didn't show us that he was untrustworthy. It didn't show us that he had a character flaw. It may have shown us, if it's true, that he cheated on his wife, but this does not render him the exclusive malefactor of our times. What it did show inadvertently was how tough he was. Because all of this was printed, he had to hang in there and take it, and he did, and I think that said a lot to the American people.

However, there was another lesson about it which we learned as we went along and that is that the voters did not care about his sex life. The voters cared about the economy. They cared about it in New Hampshire and they cared about it in Illinois, and they cared about it in Georgia, and then even cared about it on the mainline in Philadelphia. A lot of people missed that. A lot of people missed the way in which Clinton met the demands, the particular demands of the American people, and a lot of people wrote a lot of stupid stories because of being so preoccupied with this.

Now lest I seem to be beating up on the competition, I must say, in passing of course, in case a tape of this reaches 43rd Street, that there was another case, that of the William Kennedy Smith episode in Florida when The New York Times was a key player in the chain of bad to worse. In this case, the name of the woman who claimed to have been raped was printed first by a supermarket tabloid called The Globe. It was picked up by NBC and The New York Times put it into a story as big as life.

Now how do we stop this? Be sure of one thing. The flood of junk will continue. Here is the current issue of The National Enquirer. The lead piece says "Clinton's Brother Back on Cocaine." In what is described as an exhaustive investigation in a copyrighted story, they have interviewed one person who describes himself as a former cocaine addict who says that the republic is in danger because the President doesn't know that his brother is back on co-

caine. Easy to laugh at but I would wager anyone in the audience a good dinner—something of which I am very fond—that this will produce within six months a large number of stories about the Billy Carter parallel in this administration. I suppose they will interview this same former cocaine addict or maybe they won't bother. They'll just pick it up. But it isn't restricted, this flow of junk, to The National Enquirer. I have in my hand, as Senator McCarthy used to say in Wheeling, West Virginia, a page from Newsweek magazine of April 5, 1993. This contains a piece reporting on alleged frictions between the Clinton family and the Secret Service. It says the Clintons have threatened to sack the Secret Service and get somebody else. It is modestly improbable. It is also fairly hard to get into print in most publications a story which is flatly denied and vigorously denied and roundly denied by the President's spokesman, by the President, by the President's wife, and by the head of the Secret Service, but they managed it. That would be a bit eyebrow lifting, but what's wrong with the piece is that the whole thing has been put into the magazine so they can give you examples of the kinds of rumors that the Secret Service is alleged to be peddling: Hillary's throwing a lamp, a briefing book or a Bible at Bill; lighting a cigarette to trigger her husband's allergies. Well this goes on for a bit, and then the piece contains the following wonderful sentence, "There is no evidence to support any of these stories." This is not serious journalism. This is not what we have our constitutional provision for. There has been a general lowering of standards. I don't think there's much question about that. They're not as bad as they were in the 1890's but we spent a long time crawling out of the 1890's and yellow journalism and Hearst and Pulitzer at their worst and I don't like the idea of us going backward. Worst of all this kind of trend is relatively difficult to stop once it gains ahead of speed. It is driven by economic problems. Print is relatively healthy. There are exceptions. The New York Post, the San Francisco Examiner are having problems. So are some of the news magazines.

There are spotty difficulties around the country. But in most cities there is a monopoly and in most of those cities, there isn't much serious journalism. Talk to people who rely on local newspapers in Wyoming or Florida or west Texas or a small town in Ohio, or Jim Moody says to me, Wisconsin, and find out how much serious stuff you can get.

So it isn't always economics, but [it is] in television, above all in network television. News broadcasts and other news-based near-news shows are profit centers now. Network executives talk about the possibility of merging news, sales and entertainment. There have been horrendous cuts in news staff. And I don't want any of you for a minute to think my goal up here is to bash television. I am an old television person. I worked at NBC. I learned a great deal, a very great deal, at NBC. I grew up during World War II thinking CBS was it. But CBS now has fewer than a third of the Washington reporters than it had 10 years ago assigned to news. The foreign staff is down to London, Moscow, Jerusalem, Tokyo, and one-half in Johannesburg, that is a correspondent with no camera crew, at least that was the case when I checked about one month ago. To be a foreign correspondent in television for the big three American networks, or to be more accurate for NBC and CBS, often is to stand up and narrate film brought from four countries away, bought and brought from four countries away, not having been there to see the event yourself. Increasingly the evening news shows have the appurtenances of entertainment, theme songs, trailers for coming attractions, all sorts of things that take up resources, energy and time that might be devoted to serious journalism. And most of all, the sources are going into news magazines or what are called news magazines, into shows that are reality bites or entertainment or celebrity interviews. There are no resources in American network television today for what was in the days of Ed Murrow and Fred Friendly and others before them, the great glory of American television, the extended documentary look at a serious question.

At NBC when I was there, there was a unit that was called the "instant special unit" and if something really important happened anywhere in the world, the president of the NBC news department had the right to go to the head of the whole network and say, ok I'm going to use an hour of my yearly allocation tonight in prime time and we're going to do a special. This to me, then and now, seemed to me just exactly what they should have been doing. CBS did it even better. CBS Reports, all sorts of specials, wonderful work in the era of McCarthy when it was not easy to do. Now we not only have this problem with the networks, but we have the even lesser breed of Giraldo and "Inside Edition" and "Current Affair." And all of the survey research, it breaks my heart to tell you, shows that people make no distinction between that stuff, the news broadcast, the interview talk shows, and everything else. It's all seen as part of the same thing.

One of my oldest friends in broadcasting is Mike Wallace of CBS, and about a month ago I followed him as a speaker at the FBI Academy in Quantico, Virginia. And I was astonished to hear Mike say in response to a question that it was perfectly alright on occasion in pursuit of a higher good to use concealed cameras or to call up and impersonate someone who you weren't in an effort to trap somebody into making an admission. I have to tell you that I think our 17 percent approval rating in the news media today amongst the average person, amongst the general public, will plunge to seven if they really think that's what we stand for. I say again, you can't do this kind of thing and have people respect you.

The culmination of this in a way was the General Motors episode with the rocket underneath the car. I don't think it's an accident—I may be wrong, I'm not on the inside—I don't think it's an accident that three of the people who were involved in that were "Inside Edition" grads. I certainly don't think it's a coincidence that Michael Gartner got the sack because he was forced to admit that he hadn't followed this program or

approved it or known what was going on. One does wonder what the hell he was getting paid for.

Bob Weston, a fine producer in television, now works for Time Warner, has called the Gartner episode a red flag for journalists everywhere to take stock, but I wonder. I'm stunned by the number of journalists who come to us without much awareness of these kinds of ethical dilemmas, even simple ones.

Don Hewitt of "60 Minutes" says that the networks are using their news departments to program the networks rather than cover the news. I wonder whether we aren't going the same way in newspapers, whether for all of its graphic splendor USA Today isn't showing us a way to bite ideas into such small pieces that they say nothing, whether local newspapers and perhaps even some regional newspapers, are not using news, "news you can use" is the phrase of the moment, to cover the advertising, to have something for the ads to touch on that the readers might want to read.

There's a lot of good journalism in America today. I think above all, there are a lot of good journalists in America today. However low the esteem the public may hold them in, they are certainly brighter, more dedicated than those that came along when I was young. But we are increasingly in the hands of people who don't share our values and who don't think what we do is important. That's very dangerous, and I hope you will fight it with all that you have. ■

# Going Face to Face With Readers

BY LYNNE ENDERS GLASER

A friend suggested the other day that I was "silly, at best," to speak before "conservative" groups like the Rotary and Farm Bureau on behalf of the "liberal" media and a "liberal" newspaper like The Fresno Bee.

I not only take exception to her choice of words, I also take exception to her thesis.

First, there's nothing "silly" at all about schmoozing with readers on the essence of the First Amendment—discussing what an unfettered press means on a personal basis, particularly at a time when people have become polarized, vitriolic and vicious around issues like abortion and welfare and homosexuals in the armed forces. Then, you've got those loaded words—"conservative" and "liberal"—which somehow have taken on lives of their own that, depending on your political placement, stand for things like good, evil, right, wrong, American, unAmerican, etc., etc.

Maybe it has something to do with the aging process, but I no longer buy into that word game. And I make that point clear—should the need arise—when speaking to groups as ombudsman for The Bee, which is a McClatchy Newspapers property with a Sunday circulation of about 186,000 and home-delivery service to six counties in central California.

In order for you to more fully appreciate why I avoid these two labels, let me share some details about this turf and its people.

The economy of the San Joaquin Valley, in which Fresno sits, and the adjacent foothills are heavily dependent on farming. Many of the early

settlers came from the South and the Midwest. The region received a substantial wave of emigrants from Oklahoma, Arkansas and Texas during the Great Depression. The largest ethnic group is Hispanic, which accounts for 35 percent of Fresno County's population. The next largest contains people from all countries of Southeast Asia. The area is a stronghold of fundamentalist Christians and the Roman Catholic Church. There was measurable support for President Bush and the Persian Gulf War.

I'm sure you get the flow by now: The area served by The Fresno Bee is conservative. The Bee, by comparison, has taken liberal editorial positions on issues including abortion, farm-water costs, the unionization of fieldworkers and the right of acknowledged homosexuals to be in the armed forces. Generally, it endorses candidates who belong to the Democratic party. It supported Bill Clinton in 1992.



Not all Bee readers are thrilled by its editorial pages, which is precisely why, when speaking to groups, I make a concerted effort to keep the focus on the paper as a news carrier.

"You should expect to see opinion on the editorial pages and among columnists," I tell groups or individuals who want to debate a particular position. "But you should not expect it in the news columns—in news stories. And that's what we need to be talking about—the news."

In two years, I've accepted about 60 speaking engagements from service, social, special-interest or high school and college groups. I also spend part of Wednesday mornings, from September through May, at an elementary school as part of The Bee's commitment to reading and literacy programs. I mention this because we save the last five minutes in each class—I read to two classes a week—to talk about newspapers and how students can use The Bee in their daily lives.

*Lynne Enders Glaser was named news ombudsman of The Fresno Bee in December 1990. She carried to this task a combined 30 years of newsroom experience at The Bee, San Diego Evening Tribune, Ventura Star-Free Press and Copley News Service. She has had on-camera and production roles at PBS affiliates in Memphis and Fresno, and freelanced for a dozen magazines. She is in her second year as a director of the International Organization of News Ombudsmen. Glaser writes poetry, raises organic vegetables, snorkels and makes her own pasta—things expected of a native Californian.*

The numbers I've addressed ranged from about 250 (at one Rotary luncheon and at an annual meeting of social-service professionals) to precisely three (at a Thursday-night forum in the oil and cattle town of Coalinga, in eastern Fresno County.)

The Coalinga public library is 92 miles from The Bee Building, and to contend the evening was worth the drive would be a bit Pollyannish. However, it wasn't all bad: I met three citizens who frequently square off against the town council and had never been utilized as dissident sources by Bee reporters. Indeed, their chief complaint was that the newspaper "only prints what the council and town bigwigs want you to know. You guys don't try hard enough to get the other side." Reporters now have their names and telephone numbers.

Generally, I talk for 20 to 30 minutes on why The Bee created the ombudsman's slot, ways for readers to access the ombudsman and how and when reader reaction has caused change at the paper.

I've also spoken to college journalism classes about the First Amendment, ethics and writing, and to special-interest groups on how they can better utilize the press. But, for the most part, groups have asked me to speak because they want to hear about what an ombudsman does—what the position really means.

And so I'll remind them, for instance, that The Bee scrapped a new format for its Sunday television magazine because readers said, loudly and en masse, that they preferred the previous version; that, because of readers' complaints, the paper resurrected a monthly compendium of club information; and that the "At your service" listing of elected officials was returned to print in response to letters and calls to the ombudsman.

I also will remind them that Sioux City, Iowa, was added to the national weather report at the suggestion of but one reader, and about corrections and stories that have appeared because of a single reader's concern. It's important that readers realize that sometimes it takes only one person to cause change.

Normally, I reserve at least 10 minutes for questions from the audience. I think this is the most important part of our meeting, because it allows readers an opportunity to offer feedback that they can be assured will reach the level of policy setters; to ask questions about The Bee's news content and conduct; and, sometimes, simply to vent. To this end, I explain, the ombudsman serves as their voice—conduit, as it were—transporting their expressions from the meeting place to the offices of the executive editor and publisher without interpretation or evaluation.

The newspaper promotes the position of ombudsman and my availability as a speaker in an aggressive manner beginning with a notice at the bottom of my Sunday column. The notice includes my direct telephone line, a toll-free number for callers outside of Fresno and a mailing address. The newspaper's marketing department puts me in touch with readers who call there.

A promotional brochure, titled "Meet the ombudsman," indicates that I welcome opportunities to speak and also provides the local and toll-free telephone numbers and mailing address. The brochure is available in the lobby of The Bee Building and is distributed at Bee-sponsored functions including "how to" sessions for publicity chairmen, Bee Day at the county fair and meetings with community leaders. I also hand out copies when I speak.

House ads frequently promote the ombudsman's column and the uniqueness of having a readers' representative. The ads often result in phone calls—and whenever it seems appropriate, I tell callers I would be pleased to speak to their clubs, organizations, school groups, church units, whatever. I tell them I am available from 6 a.m. to 10 p.m. seven days a week. I don't want time, as such, to prevent an opportunity for me to share my enthusiasm about the position and what I think it that means to readers and the newspaper.

Because public speaking is physically and emotionally demanding, I try to limit talks to twice a month and do no more than one a week. Likewise, while I accept offers throughout Fresno

County, and in parts of Madera County to the north and Tulare County to the south, I decline to travel more than 50 miles from home at night. I am unsettled by the thought of having a flat tire, after dark, on a lonely stretch of country road.

To this point, I have never declined an invitation to speak, although in March I put one organization on "indefinite hold." I did this based on the caller's pronouncement that everything that appears or does not appear in a newspaper is there or is not there by design—actually, the words she used were "your covert liberal agenda." Nothing, she said, "absolutely nothing" results from human error, poor planning or bad work. Well, I don't mind taking a little mud or a few rocks now and then. Sometimes, it is almost fun to see how well you keep cool under fire. But, overall, I expect the same courtesy to be extended to me that I extend to the audience, and I put a real premium on sharing.

It did not seem to me in March—nor, really, does it now—that the organization I put on hold could provide a forum in which ideas would be exchanged freely and with respect, and that information would be assimilated and processed without preconception. I questioned the caller about my perception. Quite openly, she agreed. And, then, we agreed to talk again in fall.

Once I accept an invitation, I approach the engagement in much the same way I approached an interview as a reporter. That is to say, I do my homework. I gather as much information about the group from the person who made contact as I can. I use The Bee's electronic library to evaluate the coverage it received in the last two years and to help me figure out what issues or concerns members might want to address.

As I write this, I am two hours away from speaking to the Fresno County Democratic Women's Club. Last fall, the club expressed dissatisfaction with the publicity it received for a fund-raising luncheon and fashion show. (In my judgment, it got more ink than it should have, with a photo and post-event story in the local news section. I



was surprised by the coverage, because there is nothing new about the idea of having local politicians serve as models and because it has been almost 20 years since the feature department has covered local, non-designer shows with more than a few lines.) During the 1992 presidential campaign, several members of the Democratic Women's Club, as individuals, also said things like "The Bee is bending over backward to be nice to President Bush, with stories and pictures that make him look wonderful, just because you endorsed Bill Clinton, and that's not fair." I expected both points to be raised, along with coverage of the President's jobs bill and the way reports on Clinton's popularity, have been played.

In fact, none of the four points was raised. The chief complaint was the number of stories—most of them soft—that The Bee has run on Rush Limbaugh. From the club's perspective, the newspaper is providing Limbaugh and his political allies with an unfair advantage to preach the message of the radical religious right. "The Democrats have no voice or power that compares to that."

Learning what I can about a group helps me to formulate my approach as a speaker—whether, for instance, I want to sit on the edge of a table or stand behind a podium—and to reflect on my physical presence. I tailor my appearance and manner to each group, and I view that as neither manipulative nor toady. My intention is to remove unnecessary barriers so that we, as representatives of the press and public, can participate in a cooperative, unrestrained exchange.

I picked a pink silk shirtmaker for a meeting of a women's civic club in the small town of Reedley, a group whose members are almost all at least 60 years old and, for the most part, I suspect, have not worked outside the home. The dress blended nicely with what others were wearing. For a meeting with women political activists, I wore jeans, boots and a black silk shirt. The outfit matched several others. I wore a high-style, outrageously colorful getup to a what was billed as a "fun" luncheon and a practical skirt and blouse to a Grange

meeting in Fowler, another small town south of Fresno. Since the Grange, as an organization, centers on the participation of husbands and wives, I asked my husband to accompany me.

Contrived? Admittedly so. But the point is, I do whatever I can to launch each session in an atmosphere of mutual comfort and cooperation. And, so far, the approach has worked.

I have two questions that I will pose, if the readers seem hesitant to ask their own. The first is, "What can you tell me about your last contact with the press/the media/The Fresno Bee? Was it a positive or negative experience? How did you feel at the time, and how do you feel about the coverage, or lack of coverage, that followed?" If that doesn't get things going, I ask, "What is the one thing about The Fresno Bee you would most like to change?" Seldom do I need the first question; almost never have I had to pose both. Audience members generally have more questions to ask than there is time to answer, which means that I frequently exit with an invitation to call or write me at the office.

Outside of Fresno, the most frequently aired comments and questions center on the amount of space that The Bee devotes—or does not devote—to the dozens and dozens of surrounding towns. In the city itself, there are more comments and questions about headlines, how The Bee covers Fresno State University athletics, local photographs that depict personal grief and words/phrases that may reflect a reporter's opinion. Since January, a lot of anger has been voiced about the newspaper's decision to shorten local obituaries by excluding names of survivors.

Rarely do audience members try to debate a political or social issue. When they do, the subjects they attack generally are abortion, gay rights, gun control and other things presumed "liberal." In two years, only twice did an audience member become truly obnoxious. One man at a service club meeting was bent on proving that The Bee is a "poor citizen" and "against our community" because it has reported the shouting and shoving matches of a Fresno State coach. There also was a woman mem-

ber of a study club who loudly and repeatedly expressed her thoughts about the paper's "lousy liberal agenda" and "stinking bias." My answer was to offer the speakers five minutes of uninterrupted time to say whatever they wanted—on the contingency that, when the period had elapsed, they would yield the floor. On both occasions, their remarks were cut short by other audience members.

These meetings would provide little benefit to The Bee if the questions raised there remained a secret between the readers and ombudsman. For that reason, I include them in a daily log distributed to editors at a late-afternoon huddle to hash over today's news and plan tomorrow's front page. Copies of logs are posted on the wall outside my office and bulletin boards in the newsroom so that staff members at all levels have opportunity to read them.

Here is an example of the entries from a January meeting of the Madera County Child Abuse Prevention Council:

1. April is Child Abuse Prevention Month. What can The Bee do to help us educate the public?
2. Stories generally talk about times when the social-services system has failed, and a child has been hurt or killed as a result. Why don't we ever see stories about times when family reunification has worked or stories about the trauma that children undergo when they are removed from their natural homes?
3. Suggest a story that would explain the laws that "restrict" social workers and the philosophy behind laws that suggest children are generally better off with their natural parents than in another setting.
4. Both the Bee reporter and the social workers who appeared on the "Valley Press" television show did a good job. Please let the reporter and his boss know.
5. Appreciate it when the newspaper carries the name, address and phone number of appropri-

*continued on page 74*

# Missing the Second Industrial Revolution

*Day to Day Coverage Fails to Put Economic Changes,  
Such as Layoffs, Into Context*

BY ALFRED BALK

**I**t is an apparently conventional dispatch leading page one of The New York Times, yet to a critical eye it is an archetype of a core flaw in American media economic coverage.

"In a stunningly grim portrayal of the midsummer economy," the article by Robert D. Hershey Jr. begins, "government figures showed today that American business and industry lost 167,000 jobs in August as factory employment skidded to its lowest level since April 1983." The report, last Sept. 5, goes on to note that "manufacturing was particularly weak...with losses appearing for 16 of the 20 industries specified."

What's wrong? Hint: See a Washington Post story by Barbara Vobejda Aug. 18):

"To some, the numbers carry ominous signals—a dangerous slide in the, American industrial base—To others, they merely reflect what we should already know: that the economy is now undergoing a fundamental restructuring." She added that a government expert "attributed the decline in manufacturing jobs in part to significant gains in productivity, which have enabled employers to produce more goods with fewer workers."

*Alfred Balk, a member of the journalism faculty at Syracuse University, is a former Editor of Columbia Journalism Review and World Press Review and former Managing Editor of the technology monthly IEEE Spectrum. His writings on economics and technology include "The Myth of American Eclipse: The New Global Age" (Transaction Books, 1990). He has two daughters and lives with his wife, Phyllis, a nurse, in Syracuse.*

The difference? The thrust in Hershey's long Times story appears to be a recession-causing lag in American manufacturing performance, the most severe since 1983. Vobejda, on the other hand, provides a crucial perspective on what the numbers really signify: another step in a painful, sometimes debilitating national transition from the smokestack era.

Lance Morrow, in Time on March 29, put it this way:

"In the terrible highland clearances of the 18th Century, thousands of Scots were driven from their farms so that landlords might turn the fields over to the mass grazing of sheep, a more efficient and profitable enterprise. The wool business prospered...It was the

end of a way of life ...A transformation that merciless and profound is occurring in the American workplace."

American media have periodically noted that transformation, in individual features, editorials, book reviews and TV mini-documentaries. The problem is that context is not included regularly in daily reporting. Day-to-day coverage tends to be a business-as-usual recording of layoffs, corporate downsizing and wage and job-opportunity shifts as if these were recession phenomena little related to something greater. This clouds comprehension of an economic upheaval that is far more than a recession—it is a revolution.

Harvard's Daniel Bell refers to it as "The Third Transition," an "Information Age" or "Post-Industrial Society." Alvin Toffler, in a 1980's bestseller, called it "The Third Wave," comparable to two previous historical watersheds—the onsets of organized agriculture and factory industry. Others sum it up simply as "the Second Industrial Revolution."

In research for a book I found the revolution to be three-tiered:

1. Reindustrialization around high technology (computerization, automation and the births of new industries and sciences).
2. Internationalization of economics, politics, science, technology and communications.
3. The ascent of a scientific, technocratic culture.

Add to these a current global economic slump afflicting even dynamic Japan, and a delayed partial U.S. military demobilization from a half-



century's wartime footing, and it should be apparent that our problems do not lend themselves to ordinary beat reporting. Factor in definitions of recovery pegged to the record immediate postwar global GNP growth and unprecedented U.S. prosperity, and reality is further clouded.

In the two postwar reconstruction decades ending in 1973, global manufacturing output tripled, and in 1960-80 gross world product growth averaged double the historical norm—some 5 percent annually. Our own growth set records, doubling our median family income in a quarter-century.

That era, an atypical economic Camelot, ended with OPEC's 1970's oil shocks. Since then, real (adjusted for inflation) American wage growth has inexorably slowed and targets closer to long-term U.S. trends—some 2 percent annually—seem more achievable.

Further, just as Marshall McLuhan's "global village" has become economic as well as sociopolitical and communications reality, so has science/technology propelled us into a new unknown. As Robert L. Bartley, Wall Street Journal editorial page Editor, has written, "Not even in the first Industrial Revolution, when James Watt invented the steam engine, would you find today's profusion of scientific breakthroughs: the splitting of the atom, the development of the computer and the decoding of the gene. The Second Industrial Revolution... is changing world society in myriad ways."

How well does regular economic coverage reflect these realities?

Not well.

Take the reporting of layoffs. "LAYOFFS MOUNT AS COMPANIES LOOK FOR PROFITS," a typical front-page USA Today headline proclaimed (Oct. 14, 1991). It was accompanied by a graphic enumerating some 30,000 layoffs by 20 companies. Such reports have become *de rigeur*, with overtones of manufacturing decline or deindustrialization.

But the headlined layoff waves do not necessarily signify that we are deindustrializing. For more than three decades, our manufacturing base as a ratio of Gross National Product scarcely has changed—hovering at 21 to 24 per-

cent (in 1990, 23.3 percent). What has changed is *employment* in manufacturing. Like that in farming, it has shrunk (from one-third of nonfarm jobs four decades ago to less than one-fifth). It is fated to continue to do so, well below Hershey's and The Times's 1983 benchmark (eventually, some say, to the percentage of workers in agriculture today).

Steel, auto, textile, and other "Second Wave" enterprises all are being streamlined. In the 1980's U. S. factory productivity rose by 3.6 percent—almost triple its 1970's ratios. Six years ago, for example, Ford reported building 10 percent more cars than it did about a decade earlier—with 47 percent fewer production workers. The U.S. steel industry, one of The Times's admirably redeeming overviews reported (March 31 last year), "now often rivals—and outperforms—its competitors in Germany and Japan." Computerized, automated, "flexible" manufacturing are the new norms.

"Theft" or "export" of American jobs and companies? Would you believe economic internationalization? One-fifth of U.S. corporate assets (about triple the total deployed by Japan) are now outside our borders. Foreign operations engage over one-third of the employees—and at times yield more than half the profits—of firms such as GM and Ford. Quietly, amid headlines about Japan's tentacles, the U.S. has remained by far the largest international direct investor, with nearly four-fifths of the world total.

We are indeed the people about whom J.-J. Servan-Schreiber, in his 1960's book "The American Challenge," warned.

Ironically, then, the case can be made that the more Americans displaced from jobs in a successful effort to maintain our manufacturing production (as opposed to employment) base, the better the U.S. is responding to the New Industrial Revolution.

Among the Revolution's other traits:

- Internationalized research. Accelerated R&D has become so expensive, yet so crucial, that IBM, for example, maintains

several of its major labs abroad, including a 1,500-member facility near Tokyo and the Swiss lab that achieved high-temperature superconductivity.

- Cross-border alliances. They were first prominent in auto-making (Chrysler and Mitsubishi, Ford and Mazda, and GM and Isuzu) and are now even in computers and chip-making—most notably, IBM and the German giant Siemens. These ease foreign-market entree and spread spiraling research costs.
- Small-firm job generation. As Fortune 500 giants restructure, most U.S. jobs now are created by companies with 200 or fewer employees.
- Part-time/temporary staffing. To cut overhead and increase flexibility, firms now contract for previous in-house functions and classify many new jobs as part-time or temporary.
- A services boom. In all advanced economies, most new jobs are in services. Besides fast-food, security-guard, and other menial-pay posts, these encompass higher-echelon jobs such as accounting, finances, health, education, engineering, transportation, and lodging. Raising services productivity, then—bumping workers into job changes there—will be one determinant of economic takeoff prospects.

Clearly, another will be education and training. On-the-job apprenticeships for jobs with high blue-collar wages are largely history. Skills and credentials now command the opportunities. The uneducated and unskilled, warns Congress's Office of Technology Assessment, face being "stuck at the bottom." That, to recall a Sixties' phrase, is "social dynamite."

The ramifications of these changes unfold day by day, and therefore belong, in perspective, on daily reporting agendas. Are they? Based on my own forays outside the media culture to try to divine what really is happening and

options for coping with it, I offer these suggestions for ensuring that spot news is reported against a backdrop that enlightens, not confuses or panics:

**Give context.** This might mean only a sentence or paragraph in reports on: layoffs or corporate downswing; wage comparisons (among countries or years); corporate profit changes (when investment, not short-term net, may be the key); union membership (inexorably destined to decline in manufacturing, necessitating new arrangements for worker benefits).

It also means greater willingness to use "R" words—restructuring, reindustrializing, or even the apparently (for journalists) dread revolution, as in Second Industrial Revolution.

**Cherchez balance.** Journalism must be more than unipolar—attracted to the negative. Emphasizing only layoffs can cumulatively distort developments. In my hometown Syracuse Post-Standard, for instance, a page one headline last year (Jan. 25) read SYRACUSE AREA LOST 7,800 JOBS DURING 1991. The article, based on a state Labor Department announcement, omitted any mention of new jobs. Yet the previous Oct. 31, back on Page B9, the paper had run data reporting area employment up 22 percent—58,000 jobs, mostly in service positions (including insurance, banking, engineering, architecture, computer, and legal services). Ready material for a balance paragraph, leaving a far more accurate impression.

**Diversify sources and viewpoints.** Interest groups have specific mindsets and interests. Only pluralistic sources can lead to truly independent analysis. This means, among other things, closer general-desk attention to authorities and insights in economic publications: Business Week, Fortune, The Wall Street Journal, The Economist and The Financial Times of London. All have excelled in both incremental reporting and in-depth overviews. If possible as well, specialized periodicals such as Harvard Business Review, should be used.

It further means extending "usual suspects" lists for interviews, by tracking think tank studies and reports; writers of major overviews; the executives, economists, and other authorities they

quote; and case examples ranging from humane corporate restructurings to retraining, school reforms, and other major efforts. Thanks to on-line information services, such monitoring and followup are more feasible than ever.

**Sharpen credibility detectors.** Are major new layoffs being reported? Where's the perspective paragraph correlating them with new jobs? To structural trends in the locality, region, nation, or industry? If there are no data, aren't there expert estimates? Are scapegoats suggested? If so, where's the qualifying caveat?

If layoffs relate to Pentagon cutbacks, what's the specific longer-term public interest in saving the cost of the affected bomber, submarine, military base or other program? What are options for repositioning affected contractors' businesses? What about successful case examples? Are there ameliorative proposals, such as relocation or retraining aid?

If local or regional educational shortcomings are the subject (as increasingly they will be), to what extent is money the issue? Statutory or bureaucratic constraints? Business apathy? Teachers unions? What reforms are being tried elsewhere? What tax or other incentives might stimulate or expand compensatory training by U.S. businesses?

**Persevere.** If you fall short in one report, return to the subject. Surveys show that Americans want more and better economic coverage, and, news cycles notwithstanding, an Industrial Revolution is not a one-day phenomenon. Why should coverage of it be? ■

## Going Face To Face

*continued from page 71*

ate agencies in stories about child abuse or abuse prevention. A good public service.

6. Why does The Bee "wait so long" to include certain information in a story? "Move information about such things as legal restrictions higher up in your stories. It isn't fair to go all the way through a story that makes it sound like Child Protective Service workers have failed again, and then at the end find out their hands were legally tied."

One reason I selected this list is that it was limited to six entries. Most contain 10 to 15 items. I also chose it because special-interest groups tend to hone in on specifics and offer solutions to what they perceive as problems.

So, what is the net result of having an ombudsman who goes face to face with readers?

I believe that accepting this level of intimacy helped me to more fully and more quickly establish a voice—and reputation—as the readers' representative and, when appropriate, the readers' advocate. It has expanded the forum for discussion well beyond what the telephone and mail can provide. It has given new numbers of readers a chance to speak out on the editorial conduct and content of their Bee.

I don't contend that speaking to groups is everybody's idea of a good time. I am from a family that has a history of community service at leadership levels. I was schooled in public speaking long before I thought about newspaper work.

For years, as a reporter and editor, I repressed the ham in me.

But no longer.

Now, a couple of times a month, it's center stage for Lynne Enders Glaser, ombudsman for The Fresno Bee. And what an opportunity that is to schmooze on the importance of a free press and remind readers that the journalist's primary charge is to keep the public fully informed. This is a message I am pleased and proud to carry. ■

# SUMMER READING

## The Busy Life and the Good Life as a Foreign Correspondent

### At the Hinge of History:

A Reporter's Story

Joseph C. Harsch

University of Georgia Press 1993

278 pages. \$29.95

BY JOHN HUGHES

Joseph C. Harsch studied history at Williams College (he wrote his thesis on the Hundred Years War of 1340-1430), chose Cambridge over Oxford because it led Oxford in history, and since then has been sprinkling his dispatches and columns with historical allusions, comparisons, and references that put the contemporary world in perspective and make the rest of us working journalists feel inferior.

It's not just that he *knows* more than we do. The fact is that for more than 60 years he's actually *been* at all the major historical events, capturing the drama in print, or voicing it for radio or television.

Harsch is no distant intellectual pundit. Born a few years after the turn of the century, it seems there's hardly a major story he's missed since. As a young Washington reporter for *The Christian Science Monitor*, he covered the Hoover administration and the rise of Japanese imperialism. He was in London on September 3, 1939, when Prime Minister Neville Chamberlain announced the declaration of war on Germany. Soon after, he was in Berlin, the first correspondent to cover both sides in World War II. He was in Pearl Harbor on December 7, 1941, when the Japanese attacked. He covered the war in Europe and the war in the Pacific. After the war, as a columnist for *The Monitor* and



Joseph C. Harsch

commentator on radio and television, he chronicled the course of the Cold War, using his sense of history to put unfolding events in historical perspective.

Now, well into his 80's, Harsch has lost none of his puckish humor, his flair for living, or his zest for the journalistic chase.

This remarkable combination—the reporter's verve for getting the story first-hand, coupled with the capacity for giving it awesome *breadth* and *depth*—comes clearly through in this delightful memoir. And even in his reflections on a busy journalistic life, Harsch still manages to break a new story. The story is that President Roosevelt planned not Palestine (now Israel) as the Jewish homeland but the African colony of Angola. Were it not for

the twists of history, and the horrors of World War II, Angola might now be Israel, according to Harsch. He knows this because in early 1939 he took a leave of absence from *The Monitor* and made a detour into diplomacy with the Intergovernmental Committee on Political Refugees in London. He reproduces a confidential telegram citing President Roosevelt's desire to establish Angola as a Jewish homeland. By the end of the war, Palestine had become the goal of Europe's dispossessed and persecuted Jews. But, says Harsch, if World War II had not happened, Angola, not Palestine, would have become the officially designated homeland for those Jews willing to migrate out of Central and Eastern Europe.

Though Harsch covered the tough spots, he also savored the high life of a foreign correspondent—a way of life probably gone forever given the eagle-eyed austerity today in the counting houses of most news organizations. Highly entertaining is his account of his London tenure as NBC's senior European correspondent. He had passed up a chance to co-author a column with Walter Lippmann in order to go to London and it sounds as if he never regretted his decision.

He lived in a five-story mansion overlooking Regent's Park. He and his wife had a housekeeper and staff. Prime ministers and even royalty came to dinner. Harsch went to Buckingham Palace to have lunch with the queen (the "food was excellent and the service perfect"). He was an habitu  of London clubs. He even went on a grouse shoot ("shot several times in the direction of a grouse, hit nothing" and never went again).

*continued on page 83*

# Underestimating Television's Impact

## The Five Myths of Television Power

Or, Why the Medium is Not the Message

Douglas Davis

Simon & Schuster

255 pages \$20

BY VALERIE HYMAN

**D**ouglas Davis says he despises what he calls the five myths of television power: TV Controls Our Voting; TV Has Destroyed Our Students; TV Is (Our) Reality; TV Pacifies Us (*We Are Couch Potatoes*); and *We Love TV* (author's italics). Says Davis, "I wrote this book to revise that perception."

He fails. Because his arguments are porous, due to his painfully selective evidence-gathering process. Because, whether Davis wants to admit it or not, the medium *is* the message, and, perhaps unwittingly, this book provides more support for that position. And because, like the recent President, Davis just doesn't *get* it.

Douglas Davis is described on the cover flap of the book as "critic, artist, educator...consultant in media." He is said to have created video programs for television. If he has, his understanding of that medium is not reflected in this book.

Davis misuses the word television. Whenever he says TV, he actually refers to the three big networks, ABC, CBS and NBC. That's an important mistake, because the fact that two-thirds of the United States is wired for cable television and thus receives dozens of channels has made the medium more captivating than when there were only three to five channel choices in most cities. Further, it means that his "myths" actually remain unchallenged, because he has so narrowly defined his subject.

Then he turns right around and uses increased viewing of other networks as evidence to explode some of his "myths." For some reason, CNN, C-SPAN and PBS just don't count as TV as far as Davis is concerned. He never explains why,

and he fails to grasp that those channels are, indeed, part of the medium whose power he is trying to diminish.

And Davis carefully decides that using VCR's to play videotapes on TV isn't using TV at all. (What is it?)

For all the statistics Davis accumulates, he doesn't *know* TV. To argue against the "myth" that "TV Controls Our Voting," Davis challenges TV journalists to explain how multiple plays of a 30-second political ad (the Dukakis revolving door commercial of 1988) succeed, while careful dissection of its inaccuracy on prime time news fails. I'll take him on: It is precisely *because*

viewers only watch an average of two or three newscasts a week. Thus, the single news story debunking a particular political ad is guaranteed to miss at least two-thirds of the audience, while the ad itself will hit nearly all of it.

Davis repeatedly criticizes the standard audience measurement services, A.C. Nielsen and Arbitron, as bad science. Yet he twists other research findings to suit his purposes. For example, he cites lots of surveys that find Americans feel guilty when they watch TV and feel they watch too much. But he has perfect confidence in other research in which Americans say TV really doesn't play a very big role in their lives. Curious. It would be more reasonable to infer that people underestimate the importance of something they feel so bad about using.

Davis has trapped himself, like a scientist who must skew research to fit the predetermined outcome of his experiment. Thus, he fails to deal with important research findings that speak directly to several of his "myths." Among those findings: watching television can heighten general anxiety, enable small children to learn the alphabet and numbers early, lead children to behave more aggressively than before the viewing period began, give an unrealistically white, middle class picture of society and promote stereotypic images of women and people of color.

The trap tightens when, as he does throughout the book, Davis creates polarities and ignores the huge middle ground between the choices he offers: "Does television dominate us, or merely distract us?" "Do voters pay devoted attention to political ads, or zap them with their remote controls?" Davis takes the view, of course, that TV is merely distracting, and that most people zap commercials. I wonder whether he



political spots are placed judiciously throughout the broadcast schedule, day after day, on every network and or local station, so that anyone watching almost any television in a given week during a political campaign is virtually assured of seeing those powerful commercial images at least a few times, and probably many times. By contrast, avid news

thinks advertisers spend billions of dollars a year for TV commercial time as a matter of faith.

The evidence he provides is anecdotal, and his stories are amusing and enterprising. He interviews a number of people about their viewing habits and, listening to them, we are forced to reflect on our own use of television. And Davis spends lots of time talking about the unexpected fall of Communism, which he likens to the falsely powerful god, television.

People who work in the television business may find the book entertaining, if only because of the elitist view of the medium it presents. Otherwise, it's hard to know to what other audience the book would appeal. And, as it nears its close, his ideas begin to dissipate.

Davis writes that the current "perception" of television (as if there were only one) is an impediment to Americans' accepting the changing technology that enables us to use television on our own terms and for our individual purposes. But he doesn't say why. And the book ends inscrutably, with words and ideas utterly unconnected to what's been written before: "The issue is not whether man is guilty, depraved, or steeped in sin.... The issue is whether he/she can change, whether, given our recent display of independence, given the inexorable growth of an unexpected telecommunication system..., we can find new ways to think, love, and live rather than die. If this condition is met, the chance that the improbable world and its media will continue to elude our mechanistic predictions is at least even."

If truth is to be found in detail, this book offers little enlightenment. It is, after all, the small things we know in our gut to which we must pay attention. If I thought Davis' disputation of Marshall McLuhan's thesis was correct, I would let my toddler watch all the TV she wants. But I know better, and so should Davis. ■

*Valerie Hyman, former television reporter and corporate news executive for the Gillett group of television stations, now directs the Program for Broadcast Journalists at The Poynter Institute. Hyman is a Nieman 1987.*

## With Bean-Counting Devils in Charge

**Read All About It**  
The Corporate Takeover of  
America's Newspapers  
James D. Squires  
Times Books 244 pages. \$20

BY JOE HALL

Jim Squires got an unpleasant surprise when he returned to The Tennessean in Nashville in 1971 after studying urban government at Harvard during his Nieman year.

His homecoming assignment was to tutor a local politician, the publisher's closest friend, on urban affairs to help with a run at the mayor's job.

"After providing me the Nieman feast, The Tennessean had fed me a fish bone, which stuck in my craw, a sharp and painful ruination of the meal," he writes in "Read All About It," a curious polemical autobiography.

It's an interesting—and ominous—tale. We are left to assume that Squires carried out his publisher's questionable instructions.

Jim Squires indicates he spent the greater part of his journalistic career supping with a shrinking spoon with bean-counting devils who ran The Chicago Tribune company. And now he denounces the bottom line mentality he supported for more than a decade.

As editor of The Orlando Sentinel, we find Squires hosting advertisers at lunch and even making sales calls.

"I never promised advertisers anything but a newspaper so compelling that their customers would have to read it every day," he writes.

"So what? The Tribune's newspaper in Orlando, while never breaching its ethics, turned into one of the industry's most profitable businesses—and [Sentinel president Charlie] Brumback and I became the rising stars in the nation's fourth largest media company."

They agreed to try to surpass the previous year's profits by at least 15



percent, and by 20 to 25 percent if possible. They succeeded so well that by 1981—with The Sentinel outearning The Chicago Tribune—the pair took over The Trib.

What follows is a bitter, but entertaining, account of his rise and fall against the backdrop of petty feuds with corporate managers and budget cutters as the drive for ever-greater profits became paramount.

Squires rants at what he sees as the apocalypse engulfing newspapers as more and more fall into the hands of the big chains. He indicates that most American newspapers are losing their commitment to public interest journalism and are being driven irrevocably into the flash-and-trash camp.

Squires's basic argument is that a new breed of corporate executives is destroying American journalism in its lust for profits. One of these villains, he says, is former Canadian publisher A. Roy Megarry. He quotes Megarry as saying... "Maybe we are fast approach-

*continued on page 83*

# A Historian Writes a Journalistic Thumbsucker

## Preparing for the Twenty-First Century

Paul Kennedy

Random House, 1993

349 pp. plus appendices, notes, bibliography and index. \$25.

BY CHRISTOPHER LYDON

**P**aul Kennedy, the cautionary chronicler of empires, has a second surprise best-seller on the lists. It reads to me like a hardcover cousin of the estimable weekly *Economist* of London. That is, it is crisp, cosmopolitan, progressive in a business-like way and numbingly knowledgeable about world trend lines of demography, finance, agricultural production, technology and the rest.

It reminds me also of the *Economist* that printed my own wrong prediction of a major Massachusetts election years ago; the same *Economist* that explained last year "Why Bush will win." ("The 1992 United States presidential race appears to be over," the intrepid William Schneider began in the *Economist*'s survey of the Americas in "The World in 1992.") He continued: "President Bush

has been coasting along with a 65 percent job-approval rating. The Democrats have not come up with a first-string player to run against him.")

The *Economist* thread runs brightly through this book. Professor Kennedy (from the University of Newcastle and Oxford, not Yale) is a longtime *Economist* book reviewer. He has taken the text for his gloomy conclusion from the *Economist*'s observation in 1930 of anti-ethical tendencies after World War I:

"On the economic plane, the world has been organized into a single, all-embracing unit of activity. On the political plane, it has not only remained partitioned into sixty or seventy sovereign national States, but the national units have been growing smaller and more numerous and the national consciousness more acute."

That was just a foretaste, it turns out, of financial integration and political breakdown. Six decades later, the electronic hum of the global trading network never stops; while the fragmenting of national states accelerates and some, like the former Soviet Union and Yugoslavia, crumble toward chaos. This is but one of the grim trends for which we are to be prepared in the 21st Century. There is also gross overpopulation, plus poverty, pushing swarms of migrants toward richer, stabler societies. And let's not forget the poisoning of the ecosystem and the greenhouse effect.

Kennedy's debts to the *Economist* include his generally constructive tone and his assurance, derived from the *Economist*'s great Victorian editor, Walter Bagehot, that the rational economic analyst can figure out what is going on in the world, and that *if* the others follow the rules the world can be

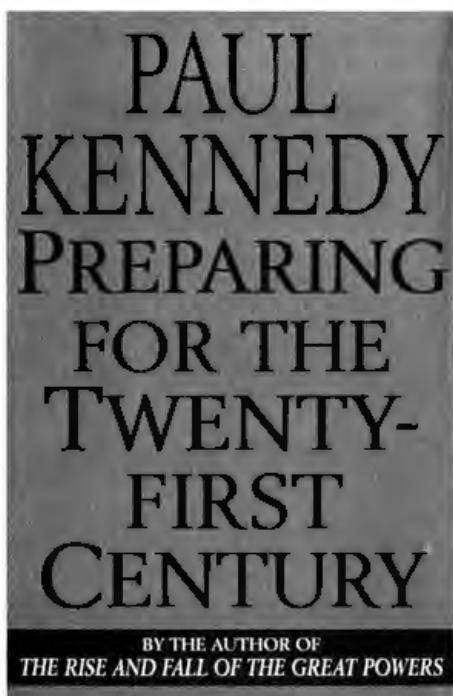
a better place. But one can doubt that his numbers tell the whole truth, and that the whole world is waiting for his rational economic remedies.

This is, then, a historian's crack at a too-familiar journalistic exercise anticipating the future and salting a lot of guesswork with the author's own sage advice. Many of us have read and, alas, written lesser essays, thumbsuckers on, say, the effect a *Roe v. Wade* reversal might have on the Republican nomination in 1996. Professor Kennedy seems to think it is safe juggling many grander imponderables, but it is not more convincing or more interesting. By the end he collapses in the same old speculative heap. Intuitively the reader knows the Kennedy forecasts are too bad to be true. His mind and his method are too orderly for the real world of immeasurable mystery where the law of unexpected consequences usually prevails.

Kennedy is aware of the irony of his own neo-Malthusian conviction that the world cannot go on like this. But he too cavalierly dismisses the Cornucopian facts. Two centuries after Malthus himself foresaw that England was running out of room and resources, many billions more mouths around the world are better fed today than ever before.

Professor Kennedy's advice to the Third World can sound obvious and arrogant at the same time: "The answer to the Muslim nations' problems would appear to be a massive program of education, not simply in the technical, skills-acquiring sense but also to advance parliamentary discourse, pluralism and a secular civic culture."

I found this imperious tone surprising from the author of *The Rise and Fall of the Great Powers*—indeed, from the



*continued on page 83*



# Heart-Rending Stories, Deceptively Simple Photos

## American Ground Zero:

The Secret Nuclear War

Carole Gallagher,

The MIT Press \$39.95

BY MICHELE McDONALD

For twelve years beginning in 1951, the American government conducted above-ground testing of nuclear weapons in the Nevada desert. Each of the 126 bombs tested released levels of radiation comparable to the amounts released from the Soviet nuclear reactor explosion in Chernobyl.

The desert was not nearly as empty as the promises of safety our government made to the military and civilian test site workers and the ordinary Americans who lived downwind from the explosions.

Carol Gallagher spent a decade finding and documenting the hidden, horrific price to the survivors of the government's tests and subsequent cover-up. Many of those exposed have since died of complications related to their exposure. Gallagher weaves narration, oral history and photography into a complex, immensely ambitious and important book.

Working in the tradition of engaged advocacy journalism, the author describes her reporting style in the prologue:

Once I arrived for an interview... the people I visited realized they had nothing to fear from me. I was dusty, haggard, out of my depth, and just barely coping with the Bomb, now a living entity to me. I had no detachment in my repertoire. Perhaps my very evident vulnerability was the best calling card.

The text, at its best when survivors tell their stories, is heart rending. Some are passionate; some resigned, some are angry; some gentle, some are bitter;

some humorous. But story by story, these ordinary people tell a tale of epic drama, a warning for all of us and our children about government's capacity for deception and irresponsibility.

In contrast to the text, Gallagher's photographs, all black and white, are quiet and restrained. The majority of the photographs in this hefty, coffee table-sized book are full-page, medium format, finely detailed portraits shot in a straightforward way.

At first glance their form resembles the stylized portraits of photographer Richard Avedon's work on the American West (black and white portraits of Westerners shot against a white background) or Irving Penn's controlled mud-people portraits more than the typical crusading documentary photography one might expect. But Gallagher's pictures do not have the cold or aloof quality of Penn or Avedon's work. She juxtaposes intensely powerful words with deceptively simple photos of people so ordinary we feel we know them.

The techniques we have come to expect in contemporary photojournalism (for example, photographers who routinely use extreme angles and lenses) often exaggerate their point. In their efforts to convey what is important, photojournalists often portray their subjects as larger than life, and thus removed from it. Subjects are instantly and easily recognized and categorized as victims. Ordinary people quickly turn the page, in horror at graphic displays of violence, or because the gap between the subject and their own lives is too large to be bridged. By contrast, Gallagher tries to elicit a response by speaking almost too softly to be heard.

Her best photographs succeed in closing the gap between the victims and ourselves, by emphasizing their normality, their warmth, their reality, which is much like our own.

The restraint characteristic of Gallagher's photographs is illustrated by her portrait of Ted Przygucki. His is one of a series of portraits scattered throughout the book of people photographed holding a photograph. Looking directly into the camera lens he shows us a photograph of one of the 22 atomic bomb tests he personally witnessed between 1952 and 1956 when he was a master sergeant.

We know from the text that all of his teeth became loose and fell out after four years of witnessing nuclear testing. In the photograph Przygucki looks natural, friendly and at ease with himself. He looks as if he is faintly smiling, or is engaged in casual conversation with the photographer. It is almost too easy to overlook the small metal button in his throat. The button resulted from a laryngectomy because of cancer of the larynx. Przygucki could not be involved in a casual conversation because he has no voice box and it is difficult for him to speak.

Isaac Nelson's portrait shows him holding a photograph of his smiling wife Oleta next to his heart. She died of a brain tumor. He tells of the first sign of trouble four weeks after they watched a fallout cloud drift over their home in Cedar City, Utah.

I run in and there's about half her hair layin' in the washbasin! You can imagine a woman with beautiful, raven-black hair, so black it would glint green in the sunlight

*continued on page 82*

## America as Seen by a Feminist Columnist

### Thinking Out Loud:

On the Personal, the Political, the Public and the Private

Anna Quindlen

Random House, 1993

304 Pages \$22

BY KATHERINE SKIBA

At her best, Anna Quindlen will strike you as an old college friend. The one with the strong opinions, a tart tongue and a 24-karat heart.

No matter that some pieces are familiar, still they will move. The ones you missed, more often than not, will keep you reading. And the now-infrequent glimpses at her children will find you wanting more. Something real-life friends rarely achieve.

In her newest compilation of columns, her voice remains original, gutsy, highly personal and often, laugh-out-loud hilarious. Such virtues outweigh the volume's shortcomings.

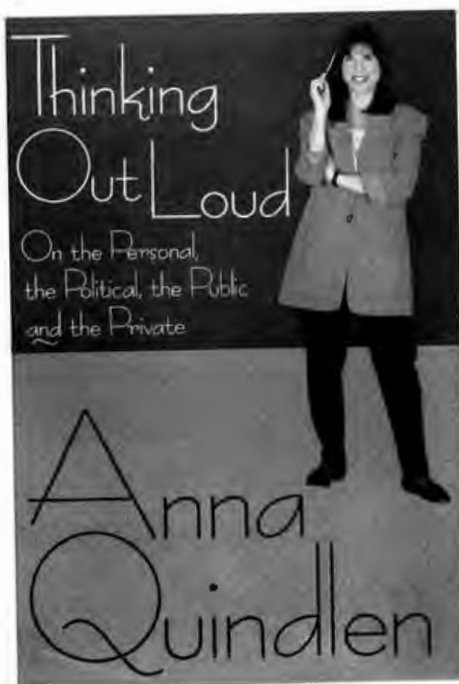
With 87 columns, most on current events, Quindlen travels the modern American landscape, pointing out the hatreds, vanities, blind spots and contradictions that create roadblocks to a fair and equitable society.

In plain, punchy language, she considers New York City, the '92 presidential campaign, the press and, at substantial length, the status of women and the abortion backlash.

Some columnists speak from behind more camouflage than a Kabuki dancer, performing for us but never without the traditional makeup and mask. Not so here.

"I am," Quindlen acknowledges, well into the book, "a working mother, a feminist and a reporter whose enduring interest has been in the small moments of the lives of unsung people, the kind of people who ride in limos only when someone in the family dies."

Few are spared her sharp-edged inspection. She takes on pro-lifers prone to make death threats, the "Clockwork Orange" adolescents in the rape of the Central Park jogger, breast-implant ped-



dlers, comedic haute couture, the Navy's raunchy conventioners, Nancy Reagan, Pat Buchanan and a host of others.

Quindlen even challenges her own New York Times, humbling the newspaper for two words it was quick to print: Patricia Bowman. The columnist won't repeat the offense, observing:

"Any women reading The Times profile now knows that to accuse a well-connected man of rape will invite a thorough reading not only of her own past but of her mother's and that she had better be ready to see not only her name but her drinking habits in print."

The book lags when Quindlen considers, in a handful of columns, the Persian Gulf War. Here she reduces the conflict to an oil-price control scheme, and preaches Vietnam-era pacifism to the point of tedium. Geopolitics are not her strong suit, her companions on The Times Op-Ed Page notwithstanding.

Her simplistic views on the war are better understood when, elsewhere, she admits her foreign trips have been limited to Moscow ("Mars," she writes) and to St. Barts ("Heaven.")

Those columns, though, are a few careless gray strokes amid considerable dazzle.

Elsewhere watch her words with envy as she takes on the establishment, jackhammering with fresh language the familiar isms—sexism, racism and classism. See her put her arm around the trampled—gays, the homeless, AIDS patients, and America's cities—until you feel your own heart, by contrast, must be molded from Readi-Mix.

And loosen your belt for some belly laughs. That will annoy only the people within earshot, for whom you may feel compelled to read Quindlen's best lines out loud.

On Anita Hill: "I learned that if I ever claim sexual harassment, I will be confronted with every bozo I once dated, and every woman I once impressed as snotty and superior."

On First Ladies: "The job description is a stereotype that no real woman has ever fit except perhaps June Cleaver on her good days."

On a new biography of Simone de Beauvoir: "This book could be subtitled as self help: *Smart Woman, Idiotic Choices...*"

On the male columnist: "...once a year he must wax poetic and philosophic about baseball, making it sound like a cross between the Kirov and Zen Buddhism."

Quindlen, you see, prefers basketball. And gives that topic, as with many others, her very best shot. ■

Katherine M. Skiba, a reporter for The Milwaukee Journal, was a 1991 Nieman Fellow.

# A Mid-Atlantic Journey of Self-Discovery

## States of Mind

A Personal Journey Through the Mid-Atlantic

Jonathan Yardley

Villard Books 1993 295 pages \$23.

BY KATHERINE HARTING  
TRAVERS

This is a book about living in and driving through the Mid-Atlantic region of the United States, an area that encompasses New Jersey, Ohio, North Carolina and everywhere between. It is written by a native, although, as Yardley notes, the name for such a person is as elusive as the defining character of the place. "Not merely does the resident of this region of ours have trouble defining his region, he has just as much trouble giving himself a name. A Middleman, A Middler, A Mid-Atlanticker?"

It is a personal work, heavily embellished with reminiscences. As it develops, the author is as much concerned with change and connectedness—in himself, in the places he visits—as he is in the landscape or its amenities. He combines a journalist's directness and precision of language with a candor that is at times endearing, as when he veers off re-tracing a circa 1950's automobile route to shop in his favorite bargain outlet.

The endeavor began after Yardley, a columnist and book critic for *The Washington Post*, accepted an offer to write a free-lance magazine piece about the Mid-Atlantic, based on his own experiences living in the region most of his life. His attention focused by the effort, he subsequently decided on a longer work, to explore the land where his ancestors had settled during the 18th Century, and perhaps to arrive at a definition of the essence of the Mid-

Atlantic region. Since it is "his" region he is defining, there is an element of self-definition in the search.

He makes his intentions clear at the outset:

"In no way does this purport to be a definitive book on the Mid-Atlantic; it is neither a conclusive statement of the region's history and character nor a guide to its tourist attractions and roadside inns... [it is] primarily a work of observation and memory...a journey that began as a venture into the world became, in the end, something of an interior passage, an exercise in self-discovery...."

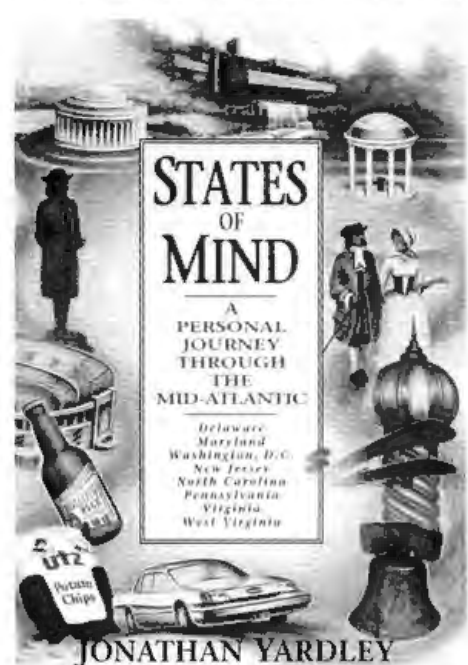
After buying a new car (a Ford, less "yuppie" than his Volvo), he embarks on a series of road trips over the course of a year during 1990 and 1991 to places including Philadelphia, Pennsylvania; New Castle, Delaware; Raleigh, Chapel Hill and Duck, North Carolina; Beckley, West Virginia, and multiple small towns in between. I regret to report he did not stop in the small town of Princess Anne, Maryland, where I live, although he noted a road sign just south of here for the Carvel Hall Factory Outlet Store and a Perdue chicken truck heading up the highway for Salisbury. In fact, what he *did* say about my part of the Eastern Shore was, "I like the way it looks, but it does get dull after a while."

He has worse things to say about other places—the development around the Outer Banks, for instance, and the traffic and the kinds of people who live in Washington, D.C.

He pans most motels, most food and virtually every kind of residential development less than 50 years old. I felt

compelled to pick up a bag of Utz potato chips simply because he had liked them.

In his leisurely, almost curmudgeonly, ramble through familiar territory, some themes emerge: concern for our deteriorating environment and cities. Aging. Finding the right neighborhood and work pattern. The capacity of a hobby to enrich and leaven (which puts his passion for the Baltimore Orioles mildly). The progress of civil rights in America, or lack thereof. The need for a sense of rootedness and a place to call "home." His "interior passage" is liberally sprinkled with details, right down to prices and highway route numbers. His lowdown on shopping in Williamsburg is priceless, as is his anticipation of two "rural clip joints," The Homestead and the Greenbrier, only one of which turns out to deserve the



slur. He tours the Rolling Rock brewery in Latrobe, Pennsylvania, and spends 24 hours in the Trump Taj Mahal in Atlantic City, New Jersey. The Flowerdew Hundred archeological site, Frank Lloyd Wright's "Fallingwater," and the Beckley, West Virginia, Coal Mine Museum are included. His stops are those any well-educated, curious tourist might visit, plus some uniquely his own: a visit with his sister and her new husband, the search for his grandparents' gravesite in a Philadelphia churchyard.

Yardley was 50 years old when he wrote the book, and he devotes a significant part of it to describing how things are different now from the past he remembers. "You win some, you lose some," he observes. The loss, generally, is in the degradation of both the natural and urban landscape. The gain, generally, according to Yardley, is racial progress. His conclusions are based upon numerous specific encounters and comparisons.

Our trip is accomplished in the company of a man who travels on a middle-class budget and offers a moderate degree of expertise in matters architectural, political, topographical, historical, commercial and *sportif*, with a modest amount of wit. He would, I think, appreciate this medium-level rating, if only because it is so in keeping with the spirit of the region he evokes. "The Mid-Atlantic is a middling sort of place," he says, not passionate or puritanical, but "pleasant." The book is a lively, clear-sighted appraisal for those of us who live around here or for anyone who might think of moving to the area. It is also a pleasant way to consider a difficult question: as the number of times that Americans move during the course of a lifetime increases, and as the population grows and as we age, how do we cope successfully with change? ■

---

*Katherine Harting Travers, Nieman Fellow 1979, is Media Specialist for the School of Agricultural Sciences at the University of Maryland Eastern Shore in Princess Anne. She is the mother of two and a graduate student in Educational Technology Leadership. During her Nieman Year she was on leave from ABC-TV News.*

---

## Ground Zero

*continued from page 79*

just like a raven's wing. I did the best I could to comfort her, but that hair never did grow back....

The portrait of Reason "Fred" Warehime shows Gallagher at the height of her quiet photographic power. High-key in tones, the photograph is ambiguous but emotionally taut. The shirtless Warehime is turned, awkwardly looking over his shoulder, unembarrassed, frowning, showing a two-foot-long scar stretched around his aging body. The scar is from an operation to remove a cancerous lung. Weeks after Warehime, a Marine, was assigned to watch a 43-kiloton bomb explosion 300 yards from ground zero his hair fell out, he discovered he was sterile and his teeth turned black, loosened and all eventually had to be pulled. He was 28.

There is a great book in American Ground Zero, but the sheer volume of the information and material and the random nature of the book's design make it difficult for the reader to find this greatness. Even the cover design clashes with the direct simple approach the cover photograph demands. At half its size, American Ground Zero might be flawless. Even so, this is an outstanding book, a fitting witness to the value, courage and beauty of the people whose stories it tells. ■

---

*Michele McDonald, Nieman Fellow 1988, is a Boston Globe photographer.*

---

## NIEMAN DIRECTORY STILL AVAILABLE

The new, compact Nieman Directory is still available. It includes the names, addresses and, when available, phone numbers of all living Nieman Fellows and a listing of all classes. Please send your check for \$10 plus \$2 postage and handling (\$5 for international mailing) to the Nieman Foundation, 1 Francis Avenue, Cambridge, MA 02138.

---

## About Journalism

**Africa's Media Image.** Beverly G. Hawk. ed. Praeger Publishers. \$49.95

**Consumer Magazines of the British Isles.** Sam G. Riley. ed. Greenwood Press. \$75

**Critical Press and the New Deal: The Press versus Presidential Power, 1933-1938.** Gary Dean Best. Praeger Publishers. \$49.95

**Eisenhower and the Mass Media: Peace, Prosperity, and Prime-Time TV.** Craig Allen. University of North Carolina Press. \$39.95 hc. \$14.95 pb

**Hard Way: The Odyssey of a Weekly Newspaper Editor.** Alexander B. Brook. Bridge Works Publishing. \$19.95

**Media and the Gulf War: The Press and Democracy in Wartime.** Hedrick Smith. ed. Seven Locks Press. \$24.95

**Media and the Persian Gulf War.** Robert E. Denton Jr. ed. Praeger Publishers. \$55

**National Public Radio: The Cast of Characters.** Mary Collins. photographs by Jerome Liebling and Murray Bognovitz. Seven Locks Press. \$39.95

**Ranks and Columns: Armed Forces Newspapers in American Wars.** Alfred Emile Cornebise. Greenwood Press. \$49.95

**She Said What? Interviews With Women Newspaper Columnists.** Maria Braden. University Press of Kentucky. \$24

**Vietnam War: Handbook of the Literature and Research.** James S. Olson. Greenwood Press. \$85

---

## Thumbsucker

*continued from page 78*

father of the "decline school" of commentary on the United States imperial overstretch. If the bumper-sticker theme of Kennedy's last book was "Be Humble, America—your military reach exceeds your economic grasp," the subliminal slogan of his new volume is: "Go Forth, America, and teach Africa and Asia how to be more like, well, Scandinavia."

Kennedy's analytical declinism made for better reading than his hypothetical new reformism. The lesson for journalists is that we do better work examining the evidence of what has happened than we do in all our if-riddled ruminating on what nobody knows yet. ■

---

*Christopher Lydon is the host of "Christopher Lydon & Company" at WGBH, public television in Boston.*

---

## Busy Life

*continued from page 75*

Before he left London, the queen gave him a CBE (Commander, Order of the British Empire), "a very pretty medal in the shape of a Maltese cross," which he now keeps in a bureau drawer. But his great delight was in finding that it outranked the OBE given The New York Times's Drew Middleton (Officer, Order of the British Empire), and the MBE's awarded the Beatles (Member, Order of the British Empire).

As this book proves, after 60 years as an international journalist, Joe Harsch retains his zest for the profession, whether writing in his Boston office, grilling sources at his Boston club, or piloting chums and contacts on his sloop on Narragansett Bay off his Rhode Island home. ■

---

*John Hughes, Nieman Fellow 1962, is former Editor of The Christian Science Monitor and presently Director, International Media Study Program, at Brigham Young University.*

---

## Bean Counting

*continued from page 77*

ing the time when the publishers of mass circulation newspapers will finally stop kidding themselves that they are in the newspaper business and admit they are primarily in the business of carrying advertising messages."

But Megarry is not, as Squires contends, publisher of The Toronto Star and The Star is not one of 122 newspapers owned by the Thomson group. Megarry was publisher of The Globe and Mail in Toronto, which is a Thomson newspaper.

What's really troubling about this little book is its too-simplistic view of a complex problem. It's fun to pin all the blame for what ails newspapers on this breed of money managers building chains of monopoly newspapers and riding roughshod over the vital role of a free press in a democratic state.

Sure there are trite, fluffy newspapers filled with "news you can use," celebrity gossip, reader-friendly tricks and meaningless stories too short and too irrelevant to be of value to any reader.

Of course many newspapers have gone overboard in the past few years in sacrificing content for appearance. But there are also all over this country great newspapers—outside New York, Washington and Los Angeles—doing journalism we should all be proud of.

For Squires to wax sentimental about the good old days on The Tennessean and to conclude his book with a chapter called "The Death of Journalism" is a disservice to the thousands of dedicated journalists toiling successfully in the trenches.

It's not Polyannaish to be bowled over by some of the Pulitzer Prize-winning articles in recent years; to be awed by the passionate work being promoted all over the country by members of the IRE, the Investigative Reporters and Editors. What is ignored in this readable account is an intelligent study of the dramatic and far-reaching re-thinking that's been taking place in our craft in recent years. We are in the midst of an exciting revolution in which journalists

are finding fresh ways, combining the best of the old with some bold new approaches.

We have taken many false steps in recent years turning some newspapers into still-life TV. But the mistakes have now become apparent to all but the most sheep-like editors.

Squires does not acknowledge the ways the newsroom can tackle declining readership or the ways newspapers are coming to terms with the dramatic advertising revenue losses.

In the past decade of budget squeezing to make record profits, many newspapers have invested fortunes in new plants and presses. The causes of the current problems are not nearly so simple as suggested by Squires. Ross Perot's former press secretary.

And the future is not nearly so bleak. What saves the book and makes it worthwhile for journalists to read are the wonderful tittle-tattle yarns about the activities of some Chicago Tribune brass.

- The executive who buys a fur coat in Chicago and has it shipped to an out-of-state address to avoid paying sales tax.
- The bunch of Tribune executives who visit Virginia after buying the local newspaper and antagonize locals by pushing into the head of a line-up to view a newly-launched submarine.

But most troubling of all remains Squires's own role of straddling the camps of journalism and corporate affairs, especially his barely disguised pleasure at his skill in managing newsroom budgets to help increase profits. The fact he was paid millions of dollars in salary, bonuses and stock options makes many of his tears today seem crocodilian.

There are important lessons for us all in the dangers of concentration of corporate ownership and the lust for profits at any cost and the threat these pose to public interest journalism. But Squires's pining for the swashbuckling days of the old owner-publishers with wicked ways but hearts of gold is nostalgic bunkum. ■

---

*Joe Hall, Nieman Fellow '93, was City Editor of The Toronto Star.*

# 24 Journalists Are Selected for 1994 Nieman Class

The American journalists and their areas of interest are:

GREGORY E. BROCK, 39, Assistant News Editor, The Washington Post. His study plan revolves around his interest in the issue of an aging population and he will pursue the public health, public policy and social impact of the trend.

SAM FULWOOD III, 36, Washington Correspondent, Los Angeles Times. He, too, is interested in current demographic trends in the United States with a special emphasis on the potential impact of these trends on race relations.

LORIE CONWAY GEORGE, 38, Field Producer, WCVB TV, Boston. She intends to take classes in education and sociology that will help her better understand trends and developments in elementary and secondary education.

FRANK GIBNEY JR., 34, Beijing Bureau Chief, Newsweek. He hopes to rediscover America after years abroad by concentrating on 20th Century political and social history with a special focus on how the United States has faced the issue of poverty.

MARIA HENSON, 32, Editorial Writer, Lexington (KY) Herald-Leader. She will concentrate her study and research on areas of common ground and common concern for relations between races and ethnic groups both here and abroad.

JERRY KAMMER, 43, Project Reporter, The Arizona Republic, Phoenix. He will use his academic year for a "status check on American dreaming about itself" by expanding his knowledge of American history and literature.

DAVID LEWIS, 35, Correspondent, Cable News Network, Atlanta. In addition to a number of basic courses in economics and law, he intends to investigate the world impact of "the nationalism that is crawling out of the world's Cold War basement."

KATHERINE MOLINSKI, 34, Chief Correspondent in Brazil, Reuters. International business and economics and international political relations form the core of her interests, along with developing a better sense of technologically driven change.

ALAN K. OTA, 38, Washington Correspondent, The Oregonian, Portland.

Professional and personal interests focus his study plan on US-Japanese relations and the ethics and politics that drive those relations in each country.

MELANIE SILL, 34, Deputy Metro Editor, The News & Observer, Raleigh, North Carolina. She will investigate the changing relationship between the federal government and urban communities in setting policy and funding anti-poverty programs.

DAN STETS, 44, Berlin Bureau Chief, The Philadelphia Inquirer. Returning after three years in Europe, he intends to concentrate on economics and international trade issues.

LARRY TYE, 38, Reporter, The Boston Globe. With a focus on the environment, he plans to take courses in several departments that will help him understand how problems are defined and resources mobilized to attack problems.

The international journalists and their areas of interest are:

PAULO ANUNCIACAO, 30, magazine writer, *O Independente*, Lisbon Portugal. He plans to concentrate his studies on Eastern and Central Europe in order to understand the American perspective on the political, economic and social change in the region. His fellowship is supported, in part, by *O Independente*.

STOJAN CEROVIC, 43, columnist, *Vreme*, Belgrade, Yugoslavia. He hopes to use his study time to learn more about the problems of minorities and conflict resolution and how these issues are approached in the United States.

KOFI COOMSON, 34, editor, *The Ghanaian Chronicle*, Accra. He will focus his studies in public policy and government in hopes of gaining a better understanding of how the press and the public influence political decisions and public policy. His fellowship is funded through a grant from The Ford Foundation.

## Sarajevo Daily Wins Lyons Award

Oslobodjenje (Liberation) of Sarajevo has been selected winner of the 1993 Louis M. Lyons Award for conscience and integrity in journalism. The selection was made by the 1993 class of Nieman Fellows.

The announcement said that although the paper's staff displayed "remarkable courage in facing daily risks and obstacles in order to publish news for a city under siege," the award was not being given for courage in war.

"We honor them for their commitment to giving a voice, a reliable and professional source of information, and a slice of normalcy and hope to the people of Sarajevo in time of desperation...."

"The newspaper staff has itself served as a symbol of sanity, of brotherhood and peace in a divisive war. The ethnic diversity of Oslobodjenje's employees speaks more than any article they may have printed. They are Moslems, Serbs and Croats working together to keep their multi-ethnic community alive and intact."

MAJEDA EL-BATSH, 35, staff correspondent in Jerusalem, Agence France Presse. Economics, political science and international relations are at the top of her study plans as well as some study of critical theory in the arts. Her fellowship is funded through a grant from The Ford Foundation.

TERRY GILBERT, 33, reporter, *Calgary Herald*, Alberta, Canada. Through classes in the Business School, she hopes to learn more about corporate decision-making and managing change. She is the recipient of the 1993-94 Martin Wise Goodman Canadian Nieman Fellowship in memory of Martin Wise Goodman, late president of Toronto Star Newspapers Ltd. and Nieman Fellow '62; funding is from the U.S. and Canada.

RATIH HARDJONO, 32, foreign correspondent in Sydney, Australia, for *Kompas*, Jakarta, Indonesia. She hopes to learn more about democracy through a combination of courses in government and political science along with courses on the emerging international trade issues. Her fellowship is supported by *Kompas* and by several other sources.

CHRISTINA LAMB, 28, correspondent in Brazil, *Financial Times*, London, England. Environmental issues and development economics and how public policy issues in those areas are approached form the core of her study plan. Her fellowship is supported through outside funding.

JIN-SOOK LEE, 31, international news reporter, Munhwa Broadcasting Corporation (MBC), Seoul, Korea. She plans a course of study that will strengthen her knowledge and understanding of the history, culture, religion and customs of the countries of the Middle East. Her fellowship is supported by The Asia Foundation.

BARNEY MTHOMBOI, 41, day editor, *Sowetan*, Johannesburg, South Africa. International relations, international trade and the world economy form the outline of his course of study. His fellowship is supported by the United States-South Africa Leader Exchange Program.

CARLOS PAULETTI, 38, special correspondent, *El Pais*, Montevideo, Uruguay. Areas of study as diverse as U.S. political history, the environment, international trade and comparative religion will occupy him at Harvard. As the 1993-94

## Loftus's Rules for Press Spokesmen

In "Turmoil and Triumph: My Years as Secretary of State," George P. Shultz recalls why, when he was named Secretary of Labor in 1969, he chose Joseph A. Loftus, New York Times labor reporter and Nieman Fellow 1961, as his press spokesman.

Herb Klein, President Nixon's press advisor, wanted to send me somebody from Nixon's California entourage, but I decided to get my own man.

I chose Joe Loftus, the premier labor reporter in the United States, having worked for The New York Times for some 25 years. Joe had seen press spokesmen come and go. "The spokesman has credibility only when reporters know that he is on the inside," he told me. As spokesman, he would have to know what was going on, be able to attend any meeting, be well informed; he would have to be able to conduct himself in accordance with "Loftus's Laws":

- Don't lie. Don't mislead. Credibility is very precious; it can never be misused. Once destroyed, it cannot be recaptured.
- Respond to questions directly.
- Help reporters get their facts straight. The press is an important way you communicate with

the public. Don't act as if they are your enemy, however tempting at times.

- Get on top of breaking stories. Be part of the original story. Nobody reads the reaction story. So be quick and don't hold back. In practice, this means a constant tug of war between the spokesman and substantive officials, who all too often are reluctant or slow to provide needed information.

Bryce Harlow [director of Congressional relations] and Joe Loftus were of another era. In their day, Congress was "the other branch," and the press was the "Fourth Estate." Since then, Vietnam and Watergate had soured the atmosphere, and each part of Washington saw enemies as it looked out at the others. Despite the intervening history, I still looked to Harlow's and Loftus's guiding principles. A free press is still vital to, and a guarantor of, good government, and trust is the coin of the realm."

---

*Joe Loftus moved to the Treasury Department when Shultz was named Treasury Secretary. He died of heart disease January 3, 1990 in Sarasota, FL. He was a 1961 Nieman Fellow.*

Knight Latin American Fellow in the Nieman program, his fellowship is funded through a grant from the John S. and James L. Knight Foundation.

JAROSLAV VEIS, 47, chief editorialist and Head of the Investigative Department, *Lidové Noviny*, Prague, Czech Republic. He hopes to use his study time to learn more of the implications of the revolution in communications technology, and about building democracy and democratic institutions.

ATSUSHI YAMADA, 45, senior staff writer, *The Asahi Shimbun*, Tokyo, Japan.

How the U.S. role in Asia and Japan's future responsibility in world political and economic affairs affect U.S.-Japanese relations is the question he will ask in classes in world history, international affairs and world trade. His fellowship is supported by *The Asahi Shimbun*. ■

# NIEMAN NOTES

Former Nieman Fellows are well-represented in the leadership of the American Society of Newspaper Editors. Geneva Overholser (Nieman Fellow '86), Editor of The Des Moines Register, was elected treasurer of ASNE; Robert Giles (Nieman Fellow '66), Editor and Publisher of The Detroit News, will serve a three-year term on the board of directors and William Woo (Nieman Fellow '67), Editor of The St. Louis Post-Dispatch, was elected to a one-year term.

Five former Nieman Fellows served as jurors for the 1993 Pulitzer Prizes in journalism: John Carroll (Nieman Fellow '72), Editor and Senior Vice President, The Baltimore Sun; H.D.S. Greenway (Nieman Fellow '72), Associate Editor, The Boston Globe; Bill Kovach (Nieman Fellow '89), curator, Nieman Foundation; Jack Nelson (Nieman Fellow '62), Washington bureau chief, The Los Angeles Times, and Cynthia Tucker (Nieman Fellow '89), Editorial Page Editor, The Atlanta Constitution.

Members of the Pulitzer Prize Board include: Robert Maynard (Nieman Fellow '66), former Editor and Publisher, The Oakland Tribune; and Geneva Overholser.

---

## 1939

---

Edwin J. Paxton Jr., 80, died March 21 after an extended illness. He was the former editor of The Paducah Sun and a pioneer in radio and television in western Kentucky. His father, Edwin J. Paxton Sr., took over the then struggling Paducah Evening Sun in 1900 and, in the early 1920's, operated one of the state's first radio stations.

Paxton began his newspaper career when, as a child, he rolled and delivered The Paducah Sun. He joined the advertising department fulltime in 1932, transferring the next year to the news department, where he worked as a reporter and columnist. He was named associate editor in 1936, and wrote editorials. From 1946 to 1957 he developed and served as manager of WKYB radio. He left to become manager of WPSD-TV, western Kentucky's first television station. He returned to The Sun fulltime in 1961 when

he succeeded his father, who had died, as editor.

In The Sun's obituary of the former Nieman, staff writer Bill Bartleman wrote: "He felt honest and accurate reporting were more important than advertising dollars. He said that whenever someone threatened to boycott the paper if certain news stories were run, 'I would just tell them to go to hell.' He had a dislike for reporters and editors at any level who felt they enjoyed a special freedom because of their profession."

In a retirement interview in 1977, Paxton said "If newsmen get the idea that freedom of the press makes them elite, it will separate them from the public they serve."

Paxton is survived by his wife, Evelyn Goodman Paxton, two daughters, two sisters, two brothers, and seven grandchildren.

---

## 1943

---

While continuing to contribute to The Memphis Commercial Appeal, where he was the editorial page editor before "retiring" 10 years ago, E.W. Kieckhefer works as the vice president of the Wisconsin Association of Railroad Passengers. According to Kieckhefer, the association is "trying to extend passenger train service between Chicago and Milwaukee to Green Bay and Madison. Milwaukee-Chicago now is the No. 3 passenger train corridor in the U.S., after Washington-New York and San Diego-Los Angeles and some of those trains actually show a profit now."

---

## 1953

---

We were informed of the death on February 9 of Anne Gordon, wife of William Gordon of Silver Spring, MD. Mrs. Gordon, a writer, was a member of the American Foreign Service Women's writers group in the Washington area. The women wrote a book together, "A World of Difference," about their experiences abroad.

William Gordon is a retired journalist and diplomat, whose work brought him to posts throughout Europe and Africa.

The couple travelled to every country in Europe except Northern Ireland, and lived for five and a half years in Africa. His last post was as cultural attaché at the American Embassy at The Hague. Word was received in our office from Gordon's Nieman classmate, Art Barschdorf of Duluth, MN.

---

## 1960

---

Reg Murphy has been elected to the board of trustees of the National Geographic Society. He is the former Chairman and Publisher of The Baltimore Sun.

---

## 1962

---

John Hughes, the former Editor of The Christian Science Monitor and now Director of the International Media Studies Program at Brigham Young University in Provo, Utah, delivered the keynote address at an international media conference sponsored by Rhodes University's Department of Journalism, Grahams-town, South Africa in April. For Hughes, it was a sentimental journey back to the place where his career in journalism began more than 40 years ago. His father had moved the family to Durban from Britain at the close of World War II, and it was there that John began work as a cadet reporter for The Natal Mercury under an editor whose credo was "live, sleep, eat, this newspaper."

Hughes' address encompassed issues from the economics of journalism to the impact of new technology. He noted the many changes in U.S. print and broadcast media, such as the decline in advertising lineage due to advances in computer technology and market research. Print journalism, which is the medium of ideas, will survive its competition with television—the medium of images—if it capitalizes on that strength, Hughes said. He criticized the American print press for becoming "mesmerized" by the entertainment-oriented television coverage and for substituting frivolous and superficial coverage for in-depth consideration of



serious issues in last year's Presidential campaign.

While CNN is expanding, all three networks are losing market share in television news and face tough competition from cable TV, independent stations, and even the telephone companies, which are increasingly equipped with fiber optics. These competitive forces raise real questions about the survival of the networks, and at the very least will necessitate cutbacks in foreign bureaus, Hughes said.

He recalled comments by Robert MacNeil, of the MacNeil/Lehrer NewsHour, on the implications of the revolution in methods of gathering news made possible by advances such as satellite technology. "Everybody will be able to carry a camera pretty soon. The cameras get tinier and tinier and soon you won't even need to put reels of cassette tape in them. You'll just put a little wafer like a credit card in and everything will be digitally recorded. You're going to have eye-witnesses, lens-witnesses, to all kinds of information that supports what I call a sort of humanitarian, human rights vision, of foreign affairs. Not the abstract stuff that we [pundits] often talk about, but the starvation, the poverty, the lack of water, drought, disease, gross distortions in standards of income and living, overpopulation, environmental degradation."

Whatever the impact of technological changes, the age-old questions of ethics will remain the same, Hughes said. Freedom of the press, so essential to democratic government, carries heavy responsibilities. Issues will continue to arise in regard to plagiarism, objectivity, the use of anonymous sources, intrusions upon the privacy of others, and the fabrication of stories as in the recent case in which NBC was caught faking a test of General Motors trucks. It is in the self-interest of the profession to continue to monitor and debate these issues, Hughes said, for if the profession itself does not do so, others may be tempted to.

---

## 1967

---

Joseph E. Mohbat has become program director for INFORM, Inc., a non-profit national environmental research organization based in New York City. He oversees the research, publications and communications operations for the 20-year-old organization, whose most recent major publications are "Making Less Garbage," "Paving the Way to Natural Gas Vehicles,"

and "Preventing Industrial Toxic Hazards: A Guide for Communities."

Mohbat recently completed and is seeking a publisher for "War Baby," the story of a Vietnam veteran afflicted with post-traumatic stress disorder.

Before joining INFORM in January, he practiced law in New York for 12 years.

---

## 1981

---

David Lamb's latest book, "A Sense of Place," was published in April by Random House/Times Books.

---

## 1982

---

Chris Flogan writes to say that he is now living in Lexington, MA., and is president of a professional services and specialty publishing company that he founded.

Last year McGraw-Hill published a book Chris wrote called "The Baldrige: What It Is, How It's Won, How To Use It To Improve Quality In Your Company." The book was selected for the Business Week Book-of-The-Month Club and, Chris reports, has been selling well. In late 1993, he and a colleague at his company will be publishing another book with McGraw-Hill, "Benchmarking For Best Practices: Winning Through Innovative Imitation."

---

## 1983

---

Bill Marimow, formerly assistant to the publisher of The Philadelphia Inquirer and Philadelphia Daily News, is now the metropolitan editor of The Baltimore Sun.

---

## 1989

---

Julio Godoy is an assistant in the Department of Economics at the University of Bremen while working on his Master's degree in economics, environment and development. The new address of Julio and his wife, Barbara Schulte, is: Roemerstr. # 18, D-28 Bremen 1, Germany.

Liu Binyan is publisher of a new newsletter originating from Princeton University. The title is "ChinaFocus." It is a publication of the Princeton China Initiative, a nonprofit research institute dedicated to the study of Chinese current affairs and contemporary history. Printed in English, ChinaFocus is "intended to serve as a bridge between Western China watchers and the Chinese community.

Our editorial board will pay special attention to topics of importance to Chinese observers and conditions affecting China's ongoing political, social and economic changes." The managing editor is Lorraine Spiess.

---

## 1990

---

A letter from Yossi and Billie Melman brought some good news:

"On March 18, 10:35 local time, Daria was born. It was a caesarian section and Billie is slowly recovering. Yotam is very happy and proud to have a baby sister...."

"Why we called her Daria? Well, there are several reasons but my preferable explanation is as follows: In the late Sixties or maybe early Seventies I saw 'Zabrinsky Point', a movie by the Italian director, Michelangelo Antonioni. The main actress was someone called Daria Halpern. Her name was engraved in my mind and as a middle-aged guy who is still nostalgically stuck in the Sixties I decided it is a beautiful name. Billie gladly agreed. By the way, it was a bad movie."

The Melmans plan to spend the 1993-94 academic year at the University of Michigan where Billie has received a resident professorship at the Center for the Humanities.

---

## 1991

---

In March, The Milwaukee Press Club announced the winners of their annual Excellence in Journalism Contest for 1992. Katherine Skiba won the first-place award in the writing division for best coverage of a spot news event by an individual. Her stories dealt with the police officers involved in the Jeffrey Dahmer serial murders.

In comments about Kathy's work, the judges said that "The reporter took an extremely complicated and emotional issue and presented, on deadline, clarity, objectivity and order to the story. The link to the L.A. riots and the officers' personal anguish made this a winner."

The award is the fifth Kathy has received from this statewide competition in five years.

Luis and Adrienne Moreno report that they have finally moved into their new apartment, "which took longer to construct than the Acropolis, and looks about the same except we have a roof." Their

new address is Carrera 1 Este #74-14, Torre 6 Apto. 501, Bogota, Colombia.

Luis, who is Minister of Development, is doing well, "pushing through a competition law outlawing monopolies and price fixing. Also finally got the government to write an industrial policy which even if not everyone agrees with it 100 percent, people and businessmen are happy that there's some guidelines for the future."

Rui Araujo received word in March that he has won the "Premio Bordala Pinheiro" award, a national recognition for journalism granted by the media of Portugal by anonymous nomination. The award is not just for a year's work, but based on the work of his career.

Rui has just returned from a trip to East Timor, where he was covering the trial of the guerrilla leader Xanana Gusmao. He said the trip was problematical, since "immediately upon arriving in Indonesia with a visa I was summarily arrested at the airport and deported, 'manu militari,' on the first plane to Europe. I made my way to Singapore and from there reestablished contact with the generals in Jakarta who made provisions for my return there. I was greeted on my return to Indonesia by a military escort of three colonels and taken to my hotel in a military van. Finally, I was admitted to East Timor where I covered the trial while constantly under surveillance by the secret police. All the people we interviewed were later 're-interviewed' by the authorities. Before we were again expelled from the country we managed to obtain a letter and some documents from the new leader of the guerrilla movement fighting the Indonesians from the mountains...."

Rui is trying to return to East Timor for the end of the Xanana trial, but so far doesn't know how the Indonesians will react to his request to reenter the country.

---

## 1992

---

Charles Onyango-Obbo, in a March letter, brings us up to date on his country: "Uganda...believe it or not, right now is among the most stable countries in Africa. The popular, albeit cynical, explanation here is that we started killing each other about ten years before the rest of Africa, and we got exhausted early. Now we have an annual inflation rate of just under 10 percent, a remarkable rate if you consider that when the present government came to power the rate was 300 percent. And our currency is the strongest in the region, having appreciated by more than

50 percent against the Kenyan shilling since early January.

The conflicts in the northern part of the country in which the army committed outrageous human rights abuses have ended too. We also have an interesting model of press control here. In the last year the government decided not to arrest or harass any journalist. And to behave like some of the rabidly critical newspapers did not exist.

Two publications, *The Shariat* (edited by militant Muslim youth), and *The Citizen* (an opposition paper) went to extremes in their criticism of the government and the president. They called the president a mad man, a thief, an adulterer and all the belittling things they could muster. Every day the city would have its breath, waiting for the arrest and execution of the editors. Nothing happened.

In the end, the readers seem to have taken the view that if the government did not care, why should they? They just stopped buying the papers, and most people have already forgotten that these papers still exist. Their circulation fell by nearly 90 percent. The good thing about this is that newspapers now try very hard to be balanced and fair, otherwise they won't get read."

Charles also writes that his paper, *The Monitor*, is doing very well. It is now published bi-weekly, and the cover price was reduced by 15 percent. With these changes, they hoped to increase their total weekly circulation by 5,000, to 25,000. Instead, their total weekly circula-

tion now is 40,000. They are eventually hoping to have enough money to finance the local expenses for an opinion polling operation and to make a down payment on a printing press.

Turning to his family, Charles mentions that he, his wife Patricia, and daughter Charlene all had malaria. He and Patricia lost their immunity while they were out of the country, and Charlene never had any. After a difficult time, they all are now in good health.

---

## 1993

---

The powerful '93 Nieman softball team crushed an inept Harvard Crimson squad 17-10 behind the masterful pitching of Heidi Evans and long balls from Sam Hurst, Matt Zencey and Greg Roberts.

The Niepersons also put on a dazzling display of glove work, featuring a nifty lineout-double play turned by shortstop Zencey and rock-solid keystone sacker Denise Hurst, and a leaping grab of a screaming liner by rightfielder Gina Higgins.

But it was Evans's twirling that left the Crimson groping for answers. With her baffling bloopers, she set down eight batters on swinging strikes in the seven-inning tilt, including fanning the side in the fourth.

When it was all over, the historic Field Tucked Away Somewhere Behind a Building Near the Hockey Rink rang with the storied cheer: "Agnes! Agnes! Agnes Wahl Nieman! Yeaaaaay Nieman!" ■



Both these charming fellows looking over maps of Bosnia are on the staff of *The Daily Telegraph*, where Nigel Wade, class of 1983, (right) is foreign editor and Peter Almond, class of 1981, (left) is defense correspondent. As far as they know they're the only two British Nieman Fellows still in daily British journalism. There have only been about five in the entire Nieman history. Peter came to Harvard from the staff of the now-defunct *Cleveland Press*, Nigel from Moscow where he was *The Telegraph's* correspondent. Any Nieman classmates passing through London—especially the 83-ers thinking about a 10th anniversary reunion—are welcome to give us a call at the *Telegraph*. The phone number is 071-538-6499.



# NIEMAN REPORTS

ONE FRANCIS AVENUE

CAMBRIDGE MASSACHUSETTS 02138